



Budget 2025–26

WOMEN'S BUDGET STATEMENT

Statement by

Senator the Honourable Katy Gallagher

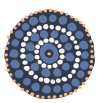
Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Minister for the Public Service,
Minister for Government Services of the Commonwealth of Australia

and

The Honourable Jim Chalmers MP

Treasurer of the Commonwealth of Australia

25 March 2025



Treasury acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.



Budget

2025–26

WOMEN'S BUDGET STATEMENT

Statement by

Senator the Honourable Katy Gallagher

Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Minister for the Public Service,
Minister for Government Services of the Commonwealth of Australia

and

The Honourable Jim Chalmers MP

Treasurer of the Commonwealth of Australia

For the information of honourable members
on the occasion of the Budget 2025–26

25 March 2025

© Commonwealth of Australia 2025

ISBN 978-1-923278-15-8

This publication is available for your use under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence, with the exception of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, third-party content and where otherwise stated. The full licence terms are available from <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>.



Use of Commonwealth of Australia material under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence requires you to attribute the work (but not in any way that suggests that the Commonwealth of Australia endorses you or your use of the work).

Commonwealth of Australia material used 'as supplied'.

Provided you have not modified or transformed Commonwealth of Australia material in any way including, for example, by changing the Commonwealth of Australia text; calculating percentage changes; graphing or charting data; or deriving new statistics from published statistics – then the Commonwealth of Australia prefers the following attribution:

Source: The Commonwealth of Australia.

Derivative material

If you have modified or transformed Commonwealth of Australia material, or derived new material from those of the Commonwealth of Australia in any way, then the Commonwealth of Australia prefers the following attribution:

Based on Commonwealth of Australia data.

Use of the Coat of Arms

The terms under which the Coat of Arms can be used are set out on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet website (see www.pmc.gov.au/honours-and-symbols/commonwealth-coat-arms).

Other uses

Enquiries regarding this licence and any other use of this document are welcome at:

Manager
Media Unit
The Treasury
Langton Crescent
Parkes ACT 2600
Email: media@treasury.gov.au

Internet

A copy of this document is available on the central Budget website at: www.budget.gov.au.
Printed by CanPrint Communications Pty Ltd.

Support and note on data

Support

This Statement includes information that may be distressing for some readers. It outlines the tragic impacts of violence against women, including sexual assault, as well as issues such as suicide and self-harm. The Government respectfully acknowledges and regrets the loss of those who have died, and the harm caused to those who are affected by violence, suicide or self-harm.

Help is available. Lifeline provides 24-hour support in Australia for those experiencing a personal crisis and can be contacted by calling 13 11 14 or visiting lifeline.org.au. If you, or someone you know, is experiencing family, domestic or sexual violence, you can contact 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732) or visit 1800respect.org.au for support.

Note about data

This Statement endeavours to include data and analysis to demonstrate the outcomes experienced by different groups of women, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, women with disability, women of different ages, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual or other sexually or gender diverse (LGBTIQ+) populations. There are, however, limitations to data in some cases, particularly small population or sample sizes. The Government is committed to ensuring data is available to help inform better outcomes for all Australians, noting this needs to be culturally appropriate and protect the right to privacy.

This Statement uses unit record data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey. The HILDA Project was initiated and is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) and is managed by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research (Melbourne Institute). The findings and views reported in this paper, however, are those of the authors and should not be attributed to either DSS or the Melbourne Institute.

The majority of the data collected and reported in this Statement relate to sex, not gender. *Sex* is based upon the person's sex characteristics, such as their chromosomes, hormones and reproductive organs. *Gender* is a social and cultural concept. It is about social and cultural differences in identity, expression and experience as a man, woman or non-binary person. This Statement uses the terms *women* and *men* in reference to both sex and gender.

Contents

Foreword	1
Women’s Budget Statement at a glance	6
Gender-based violence	9
Key statistics	9
Ending gender-based violence	9
Preventing violence against women and children	11
A frontline response to gender-based violence	15
Strengthening systems responses to violence	18
Ensuring safe education and workplaces for women	24
Unpaid and paid care	27
Key statistics	27
Valuing and sharing unpaid care	27
Strengthening the care and support sector	34
Economic equality and security	39
Key statistics	39
Providing cost-of-living relief to women and families	41
Increasing women’s workforce participation	43
Narrowing the gender pay gap	45
Enhancing long-term economic equality and security for women	48
Health	55
Key statistics	55
Strengthening women’s health care across the life course	56
Improving health care access, affordability and quality for women	65
Leadership, representation and decision-making	71
Key statistics	71
Women in leadership and decision-making	72
Women’s and girls’ representation and participation in sport	75
Building gender equality capability across government	76
Global leadership on gender equality	77

Foreword

Equality for women has been a priority of the Albanese Government since day one. We are the first majority-woman Federal Government in Australia's history, we have the first gender equal Cabinet, and every single member of the Government is committed to making life better for women. Because we know that when women have fair opportunities, are treated equally, have access to health care and are safe, we grow our workforce, lift our living standards, boost productivity, and maximise the talent and capability we need to build Australia's future.

We know that shifting the dial for women's equality requires effort across the board. This is reflected in *Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality (Working for Women)*, which outlines a ten-year plan for investing in gender equality across five priority areas: gender-based violence; unpaid and paid care; economic equality and security; health; and leadership, representation and decision-making.

These areas have been a focus for the Albanese Government since our first budget, and in making women's equality a core economic imperative, we have been able to focus across portfolios and across every budget on actions that work together to drive gender equality. The Women's Budget Statement reports on progress in implementing *Working for Women* by highlighting Government decisions and investments to achieve gender equality year on year.

One year into *Working for Women*, the Government is continuing to take action to improve the lives of women in Australia and we are seeing progress. Under our Government, the national gender pay gap has fallen to 11.9 per cent as of November 2024 – down from 14.1 per cent in May 2022. In this same time period, women's full-time average weekly ordinary time earnings have grown by \$217.40 a week, helping women to better deal with cost-of-living pressures and build their lifelong economic security. The Government's tax cuts for every taxpayer are also designed to make it easier for women to work more and keep more of what they earn. And we have reached record highs for women's workforce participation in 2025.

The Government's workplace relations reforms, investments in cheaper early childhood education and care, and expansion of the Paid Parental Leave scheme are having an impact. But there is more to do. While narrowing, the gender pay gap persists – a reflection of challenges related to care and flexibility, industry gender segregation, women's under-representation in senior roles and discrimination. Women continue to carry the larger share of unpaid work, impacting their financial security, including into retirement. And most importantly, women must – and deserve to – be safe.

Our priority is ensuring women and children are free from violence and abuse in their homes, workplaces, communities and online. Since the 2022–23 October Budget, we have invested over \$4 billion in initiatives to support women's safety and deliver the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*. In the second half of 2024, the Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches informed a national package of investments to help end the scourge of violence against women and children in this country. We extended

the National Partnership Agreement on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses to support frontline service delivery and provided funding to strengthen responses to high-risk and serial perpetrators, support children and young people, and invested in initiatives to help break the cycle of violence. In addition, we are supporting frontline legal assistance services through a new \$3.9 billion National Access to Justice Partnership with the states and territories, which includes a focus on uplifting services that respond to gender-based violence and providing culturally safe legal assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Everyone should feel safe and supported in higher education settings. From 1 February 2025, we established the National Student Ombudsman, which has powers to investigate student complaints and resolve disputes with higher education providers, including complaints about sexual assault, sexual harassment and all gender-based violence. We have also made significant reforms to increase women's safety at work, including to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.

We are building on those reforms with investments in this Budget to improve justice responses for victim-survivors of sexual violence and address domestic, family and sexual violence against First Nations women.

Our Government is committed to listening to and working in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, families and communities. We have responded to the Senate Inquiry into missing and murdered First Nations women and children, which is informing our work to end violence against First Nations women. National Cabinet also committed to maintain a central focus on missing and murdered First Nations women and agreed all government commitments on gender-based violence must explicitly consider the needs and experiences of First Nations people and be delivered in genuine partnership with First Nations communities.

We will continue to work through National Cabinet and in close collaboration with state and territory governments to ensure a nationally coordinated approach to ending gender-based violence.

Low wages in the female-dominated care and support economy drives the gender pay gap and a lack of affordable early childhood education and care is a barrier to families working the way they want. From January 2026, under the 3 Day Guarantee, families will be eligible for at least 72 hours of Child Care Subsidy each fortnight for early childhood education and care regardless of activity levels, with 100 subsidised hours per fortnight for families caring for a First Nations child. The \$1 billion Building Early Education Fund will build more early childhood education and care centres and expand services in areas of need, including in the outer suburbs and regional Australia. We are delivering a phased 15 per cent wage increase for eligible early childhood education and care workers over two years from December 2024, which will help retain existing early childhood educators and attract new employees to this sector. These investments help address the undervaluation of this critical female-dominated workforce and will make early childhood education and care more affordable and accessible so that families have more choices.

The Australian labour market remains highly gender-segregated by industry and occupation, which may impact skills shortages in key workforces and contribute to the gender pay gap. We are working to promote greater gender balance and opportunities through our investments in new and emerging industries. We are implementing our Future Made in Australia agenda, including the Community Benefit Principles to promote safe and secure jobs and develop more skilled and inclusive workforces, including for women. These principles are consistent with the Government's commitment to address the drivers of workforce gender segregation to ensure women share in the jobs of the future.

We recognise that Government cannot solve workforce gender segregation on its own, and that is why we are bringing together industry, employers and unions to drive systemic structural and cultural change through a new \$16.4 million tripartite pilot grants program. We recognise that Government cannot solve workforce gender segregation on its own, and that is why we are bringing together industry, employers and unions to drive systemic structural and cultural change through a new \$16.4 million tripartite pilot grants program. The program will create partnerships with peak employer organisations and state and territory Trades and Labour Councils who are uniquely placed to help identify new ways to make workplaces safer, more respectful and more equitable for women in traditionally male-dominated sectors.

Our Government has made deliberate structural reforms to close gender gaps in the workplace. We made gender equality a central objective of the *Fair Work Act 2009*, introduced ten days of paid family and domestic violence leave for all 12.4 million workers, and funded wage increases in aged care and early childhood education and care – two undervalued female-dominated sectors facing labour shortages. The data collected by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency allows us to track progress and increase transparency on workplace gender equality. We are now in the second year of reporting the gender pay gaps of private sector employers with more than 100 employees, bringing focus to how – and if – businesses are working to advance equality within their own workplaces. Pay gaps for public sector employers will be published for the first time in the first half of 2025.

We know that increasing accountability and raising the bar for large employers helps drive action and progress. We have introduced the Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Setting Gender Equality Targets) Bill 2024, which will introduce a world-first targets scheme to accelerate action on gender equality by large Australian employers. It will require organisations with 500 or more employees in Australia to commit to achieve – or, at a minimum, improve on – measurable targets to progress gender equality in their workplaces. Targets will lead to more ambitious commitment and progress, driving workplace gender equality in Australia.

The Albanese Government recognises that women have specific and varied health needs and often face higher health costs and health care not targeted to these needs. We have listened to women and the advice of experts and are taking action to address long-standing gaps in our healthcare system. This Budget invests \$792.9 million over five years from 2024–25 to deliver more choice, lower costs, and better care for women. This includes the first Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme listings for new oral contraceptive pills in more than 30 years and the first listing for new menopausal hormone therapies in over 20 years. This package will increase Medicare rebates and enable more bulk billing for the insertion and

removal of long-acting reversible contraceptives, help deliver new endometriosis and pelvic pain clinics, and support women experiencing menopause. These changes will improve access and provide critical cost-of-living relief by saving some women thousands of dollars across their lifetimes.

Since our Government reintroduced gender responsive budgeting in 2022, gender analysis and policy alignment with the five priorities of *Working for Women* have become a core element of Government decision-making. With more women in this Government's Cabinet than ever before, we are ensuring policies work towards gender equality and encourage women's participation in decision-making and leadership.

Our investments in this Budget are a continuation of our work to advance gender equality since we came to Government, with reforms continuing to come online – superannuation will be paid on Government-funded Paid Parental Leave for babies born or adopted on or after 1 July 2025 and will expand to six months from July 2026. Our expansion of the Parenting Payment (Single) and launch of the new Parent Pathways program in late 2024 will continue to support vulnerable parents and their children. We have introduced legislation to make Free TAFE permanent and Commonwealth Prac Payments start from mid-2025, supporting women to invest in their education. Our reforms to HELP and other student loans, including limiting indexation and our proposed changes to the repayment system and to reduce student debts, will help with the cost of living. We have made structural changes and landmark investments to narrow the gender pay gap, increase wages in female-dominated workforces, improve the accessibility and affordability of critical services like health care and early childhood education and care, and make national-level and lasting investments to end gender-based violence and keep women safe.

We have made huge strides forward over the last three years, but we know there is still a way to go. For the Albanese Government, women's equality is not an afterthought, it is essential to building Australia's future. And we will continue to take this important work seriously as we strive to create a better, more equal Australia for everyone.

The Honourable Anthony Albanese MP
Prime Minister

The Honourable Jim Chalmers MP
Treasurer

Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher
Minister for Finance
Minister for Women
Minister for the Public Service
Minister for Government Services

Women's Budget Statement at a glance

<p>Gender-based violence</p> <p>On average, one woman was killed every ten days by a current or former partner in 2024.</p> <p>Strengthening evidence-based prevention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promoting healthy relationships and consent• Supporting children and young people affected by violence• Delivering prevention and early intervention services with First Nations communities <p>A frontline fight against violence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increasing national coordination and funding of frontline services, including critical legal and housing services• Supporting the safety and wellbeing of First Nations women and children <p>Enabling systems-based change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bolstering justice, government and financial systems to better protect women and children• Strengthening responses to high risk and serial perpetrators of family and domestic violence• Working with men and boys to break the cycle of violence• Ensuring safe education and workplaces	<p>Unpaid and paid care</p> <p>Women continue to shoulder most of the unpaid care in Australia, which undermines women's lifelong economic security.</p> <p>The care and support sector is also dominated by women, and is more likely to be low paid and insecure work.</p> <p>Valuing and sharing unpaid care:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helping working families balance work and care through expanded Paid Parental Leave including paying super on it, and by building a universal early childhood education and care system• More support for carers, with greater flexibility to balance work and study with their caring responsibilities <p>Strengthening the care and support sector:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supporting wage increases for workers in the aged care and early childhood education and care sectors• Building a stronger workforce pipeline, including by addressing financial disincentives for students in care sectors
---	---

<p>Economic equality and security</p> <p>Women’s workforce participation reached record highs in 2025 but gender gaps remain, with an 11.9 per cent gender pay gap in working-life and a \$57,000 superannuation gap approaching retirement.</p> <p>Supporting women in their daily lives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost-of-living support including extending energy bill relief • Making student loans fairer • Tax cuts for every woman taxpayer <p>Addressing structural drivers of inequality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backing wage growth for low-paid workers, who are disproportionately women, and supporting the Fair Work Commission’s Gender Undervaluation – Priority Awards Review • Publishing employer gender pay gaps and encouraging employer-level action • Building a more gender-balanced workforce, including through the Future Made in Australia agenda and Free TAFE 	<p>Health</p> <p>Women experience more chronic health conditions, with higher health care demand and out-of-pocket costs</p> <p>Women also have complex sexual and reproductive health conditions that have been underfunded and under researched</p> <p>More choice, lower costs and better health care for women:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved contraceptive choice and affordability • Cheaper and enhanced menopause and endometriosis care • More accessible IVF and maternal health treatment <p>Strengthening Medicare access and affordability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scaling up bulk billing and urgent care clinics • Cheaper medicines and treatments • Expanding the health care workforce
<p>Leadership, representation and decision-making</p> <p>Australian women have been historically under-represented in leadership and decision-making structures, contributing to gender gaps present today.</p> <p>The Government is leading by example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting women’s representation on Australian Government boards • Empowering First Nations women’s leadership on the ground • Supporting women’s and girls’ representation and participation in sport • Embedding gender analysis in decision-making processes and building gender analysis capability across government • Providing global leadership on gender equality 	

Gender-based violence

Key statistics

<p>In 2024, on average, one woman was killed every ten days by a current or former intimate partner</p>	<p>Around one in four women (2.3 million women) and one in 14 men (693,000 men) have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner since the age of 15</p>
<p>In 2022–23, First Nations women were 34 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence than non-Indigenous women</p>	<p>Between 39% and 55% of domestic violence offenders had a prior history of violence towards an intimate partner</p>
<p>Around one in five women have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15, and were over three times more likely to have experienced it from a man they knew than a stranger</p>	<p>99.3% of family, domestic and sexual violence practitioners reported they had clients who experienced technology facilitated abuse and domestic violence</p>

These statistics are not just numbers – they represent real women, children and individuals in Australian communities who have experienced inexcusable violence. Everyone has a right to live free from fear and violence. Achieving this requires accelerated, collective action to prevent gender-based violence and support those who have experienced or are experiencing violence.

Female intimate partner homicides have declined over time since the collection of data on such incidents began, with 37 incidents in 2024 compared to 60 incidents in 1989–90.¹ However, each one of these deaths is still one too many, underscoring the urgency of a continued whole of community response to this national crisis.

Ending gender-based violence

Ending the national crisis of gender-based violence requires persistent and coordinated action at all levels, with victim-survivors at the heart of all solutions. All governments have made a collective commitment to achieve the vision of ending gender-based violence in one generation under the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* (National Plan). As the overarching policy framework, the National Plan emphasises that

breaking this cycle of violence must occur across the four domains of prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing. As outlined in *Working for Women*, gender equality cannot be achieved without ending gender-based violence.

The Government has now invested over \$4 billion in women's safety and delivering the National Plan since its launch in 2022. Recent Australian Institute of Health and Welfare National Plan Outcomes reporting data also demonstrates that progress is being made, including a shift in community understanding and attitudes towards violence against women and gender equality.

With First Nations women continuing to be disproportionately impacted by gender-based violence, all commitments across governments to end violence against women and children must maintain a sustained focus on First Nations women and children. Building on the National Plan, the forthcoming *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence*, will guide a whole-of-society approach to addressing the unacceptable rates of violence against First Nations women and children.

However, the National Plan's objectives can only be achieved through persistent and coordinated action across all sectors and levels of government. To build on the substantial efforts already underway to ensure women and children are safe, the Prime Minister convened two National Cabinet meetings in 2024 to agree on additional practical and targeted steps to end gender-based violence within a generation.

The first National Cabinet meeting on 1 May 2024 agreed priority reform areas for all governments as: increasing accountability and consequences for perpetrators; strengthening prevention efforts through targeted and evidenced-based approaches; focusing on missing and murdered First Nations women and children; and the impact of family and domestic violence on First Nations communities.

The Government subsequently commissioned an expert panel to undertake a Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches (Rapid Review). Since its release on 23 August 2024, the Rapid Review report, *Unlocking the Prevention Potential: Accelerating Action to End Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence*, has been and will continue to be critical in informing future reform. With a focus on breaking the cycle of violence and preventing it before it starts, the Rapid Review's recommendations target areas such as responding to children and young people's experiences of violence, engaging men and boys in prevention efforts, and understanding the pathways to perpetration to better direct early intervention strategies.

To maintain the momentum of this national call to action, a second National Cabinet meeting was convened on 6 September 2024. This meeting saw all governments agree to a comprehensive package that harnesses further important opportunities to work together to prevent violence and support frontline services.

MYEFO highlights: National Cabinet investment to address gender-based violence

The Government provided \$534.5 million over six years from 2024–25 to address the national crisis of gender-based violence and support the delivery of National Cabinet priorities endorsed on 6 September 2024. Highlights include:

- \$366.9 million over five years from 2025–26 to extend the National Partnership Agreement on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses, which will include matched funding by states and territories, and support greater flexibility for jurisdictions to direct funding to meet local need. This funding is now indexed and will be accompanied by stronger transparency and accountability mechanisms. It will also include a focus on supporting prevention activities through frontline services, including specialist services for women; services to support children exposed to family, domestic and sexual violence to heal and recover; and working with men, including men's behaviour change programs for perpetrators of gendered violence
- \$82.4 million over four years from 2024–25 to strengthen responses to high-risk and serial perpetrators of family and domestic violence (see MYEFO highlights: *Responding to high-risk and serial perpetrators* for further detail)
- \$81.3 million over six years from 2024–25 to enhance and expand child centric trauma informed supports for children and young people, and design and implement new and revised initiatives for children and young people with experiences of violence (see MYEFO highlights: *Support for children and young people who have experienced violence* for further detail).

This investment also includes funding to break the cycle of violence and prevent further harm by developing national standards for men's behaviour change, updating the *National framework for action to prevent alcohol-related family violence* and conducting an audit of Commonwealth systems to identify where they are weaponised by perpetrators of family and domestic violence.

The Government's investment is in addition to funding committed in 2024–25 MYEFO for legal assistance and builds on ongoing commitments in housing for women and children escaping violence and improved financial security for women

Preventing violence against women and children

Preventing violence before it starts is critical to ending gender-based violence. Prevention requires a collective national effort, where individuals, communities, organisations and all levels of government work collaboratively to address the underlying drivers of gender-based violence. This includes challenging harmful attitudes and stereotypes that condone violence against women, embedding activities across sectors to prevent and respond early to gender-based violence and supporting children who have experienced violence to heal and recover, and break the cycle of violence.

The Government is building on efforts to prevent gender-based violence through consent education and support for children and young people, in addition to providing further funding for prevention and early intervention initiatives for First Nations women and children. These steps also help action the Rapid Review recommendation that all levels of government should expand their approach to prevention, leverage all prevention touchpoints more effectively and identify where abuse can be prevented.

Promoting healthy relationships and consent

Improving community awareness and attitudes on consent and respectful relationships is vital to reducing sexual violence. Evidence highlights the importance of teaching young people about consent in an age-appropriate way during their early years and adolescence, helping them develop skills for respectful relationships and reducing harm.

The Consent Policy Framework: Promoting healthy sexual relationships and consent among young people lays the foundation for preventing sexual violence and promoting healthy relationships by equipping organisations with a clear understanding of consent and ways to address the underlying gendered drivers of sexual violence. A range of investments in consent education have been made to support young people having healthy relationships, including \$3.5 million for Teach Us Consent to expand its work on sexual violence and consent, particularly targeting young people aged 16 years and above.

In 2024, the Government signed a \$77.6 million Federation Funding Agreement Schedule with all states and territories, through which the Government is providing funding to states, territories and the non-government school sector to support their delivery of Consent and Respectful Relationships Education across government and non-government primary and secondary schools in school years 2024–2028. This is bolstered by the Government's \$40 million *Consent Can't Wait* campaign, which was informed by extensive developmental research with more than 2,600 Australians, and alongside consultation with a panel of sexual violence and consent experts. Since the campaign's launch, www.consent.gov.au has received more than 531,000 page views from more than 472,000 users.

Supporting children and young people affected by violence

Children and young people also experience and are profoundly impacted by violence. Exposure to family, domestic and sexual violence can affect their behaviour, schooling, cognitive development, and overall mental and physical wellbeing. With evidence showing children who experience family, domestic and sexual violence are more likely themselves to use violence or become victim-survivors as adults, supporting young children is critical prevention work to break the cycle of violence.

In delivering the National Plan and the Rapid Review's recommendation to elevate and embed the distinct experiences of children and young people as victim-survivors, the Government has funded a package of initial measures enabling immediate action while it undertakes a comprehensive consultation process to inform the design and implementation of new and revised initiatives that support children and young people. This work builds on

existing investments for children and young people, including funding for the Helping Children Heal program which provides specialist support for children aged 6 to 12 to mitigate the impacts of violence, and establishing a National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Islander Children and Young People, which commenced in January 2025 and is dedicated to promoting the rights, interests and wellbeing of First Nations children and young people.

MYEFO highlights: Support for children and young people who have experienced violence

In response to National Cabinet priorities, the Government is investing \$81.3 million over six years from 2024–25 for additional initiatives to support children and young people who have experienced family, domestic and sexual violence. This includes:

- \$1.0 million over two years from 2024–25 for a comprehensive consultation process to inform the design and implementation of new and revised initiatives and interventions to support children and young people, including a specific focus on First Nations children and young people
- \$40.6 million over six years from 2024–25 (and \$10.7 million per year ongoing from 2030–31) for expansion of the Children Specific Counselling components in the Specialised Family Violence Service program
- \$20.1 million over six years from 2024–25 (and \$5.6 million per year ongoing from 2030–31) to expand and extend funding to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to provide culturally safe child-centred support to First Nations children and young people and their families under the Specialised Family Violence Service program
- \$12.8 million over five years from 2024–25 for a targeted grants program for specialist and community support services to enhance and expand services to support victim-survivors of child sexual abuse and young people who are at risk of harmful sexual behaviours
- \$6.8 million over three years from 2024–25 to expand the Supporting Children After Separation Program to provide access to specialised, longer-term support for children of separated or separating families affected by family violence.

Working with men and boys

The Rapid Review identified that working with men and boys is critical to breaking the cycle of violence and supporting all Australians to be in safe, equal and positive relationships. Nearly 20 per cent of young Australian men believe that it is legitimate to violently resist feminism, and nearly 10 per cent find it understandable that young men who are rejected by women resort to violent vengeance.²

Online platforms are playing an increasing role in the information men and boys receive and can have a dangerous influence over how they consider their role in the community. In addition, some young men may experience violence in their own families and should be supported to recover and heal so they are empowered to break cycles of violence and men who seek support for their own violence must be helped to change their behaviour.

To support the National Plan, the Government is implementing a range of initiatives targeted at supporting men and boys, in turn helping to prevent gender-based violence. This includes \$34.8 million in project funding for an early intervention trial which provide counselling and therapeutic support for young men and boys with adverse childhood experiences and family, domestic or sexual violence risk, and \$3.5 million in project funding for trials by the Man Cave, The Men's Project (Jesuit Social Services) and for a consortium of providers led by the Foundation for Positive Masculinity to encourage healthy, respectful relationships among school-aged boys.

Funding has also been provided to No to Violence and MensLine Changing for Good Program for counselling and support services and referral information for men who use violence. Since the 2022–23 October Budget, over \$15 million has been invested in counselling and support services and referral information for men who use violence, which complement state and territory men's behaviour change programs. To ensure that First Nations men can access education programs, therapies and activities to reconnect with culture and community and reduce family and domestic violence, 13 Men's Wellness centres in First Nations communities are also being delivered across the country.

Preventing violence against First Nations women and children

Given the disproportionately high rates and severity of violence experienced by First Nations women and children, prevention approaches must consider the unique underlying causes of this violence. This includes ongoing impacts of colonisation, intergenerational trauma, and systemic and institutional racism.

The Senate Inquiry into Missing and Murdered First Nations Women and Children report, published on 15 August 2024, highlights the extent of this violence and the need for a tailored approach led by First Nations communities. The Inquiry will inform work currently underway through the National Plan and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, including the development of the *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices*, which will be grounded in self-determination, including people with lived experience and First Nations-led implementation. Building on initiatives in Australia's first dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023–2025 under the National Plan, *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices*, will continue the Government's commitment to protecting First Nations women, children and families to be free of all forms of violence.

Investment in this Budget builds on the over \$370 million invested to address violence against First Nations women and children since the 2022–23 October Budget. This includes funding for healing and recovery, such as the expansion of the Healing for Families initiative to 12 locations across Australia, which provides culturally-based and trauma-informed healing support such as counselling and therapy, financial support and advice and investments in support services including funding for Family Violence Prevention Legal Services providers to deliver supports for First Nations victim-survivors.

Budget highlight: Delivering prevention, early intervention and response services for First Nations communities

The Government is continuing to deliver actions under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023–2025 by committing \$21.8 million over two years from 2025–26. This funding will continue the successful delivery of critical prevention, early intervention and response services to address family, domestic, and sexual violence in high needs First Nations communities. Services are community-led, trauma informed and culturally safe and provide practical intervention for First Nations peoples at-risk of experiencing or using violence.

A frontline response to gender-based violence

In parallel with work on prevention approaches which have a long-term impact, strengthening frontline supports provides victim-survivors with the immediate services needed to escape violence. Impacts of gender-based violence can be wide-ranging, affecting a person's emotional and social wellbeing, employment and financial security. Without the financial resources to survive, a safe place to stay, and the support in navigating the legal system, many women and children remain trapped in cycles of violence. Comprehensive and coordinated frontline response systems are essential for keeping women and children safe, reducing the reoccurrence of violence and holding perpetrators to account.

Increasing national funding for specialist frontline services

Specialist frontline services play a critical role in ensuring victim-survivors are empowered to leave violent situations and are supported through long-term recovery. Specialist services providers report they are struggling to keep up with demand and escalating risk, and at times are unable to respond to victim-survivors. Bolstering frontline response systems to include targeted funding will ensure needed support is provided and promotes healing and recovery for victim-survivors, including First Nations women and children at greatest risk.

The Government has reaffirmed its commitment to end gender-based violence through the renewed, five-year National Partnership Agreement on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses (the Agreement) which will commence on 1 July 2025. The Agreement will provide increased funding to support critical frontline services. The Government has worked quickly with states and territories, with all jurisdictions now signed up to the new Agreement, ensuring critical funding certainty for the frontline service sector. The Agreement delivers on National Cabinet's commitment of 6 September 2024 and the Rapid Review recommendation to address factors that exacerbate violence against women and children.

Increased funding for frontline legal services

Free, holistic, trauma-informed legal and related services provide crucial support to women to leave violent and abusive relationships, navigate the justice system, and recover and achieve economic security. Half of all services provided by Community Legal Centres in 2023 went to victim-survivors of family and domestic violence, and 86 per cent of all family law grants provided by Legal Aid Commissions involved allegations of family and domestic violence.

The National Access to Justice Partnership (NAJP) announced following the 6 September 2024 National Cabinet meeting, includes new quarantined funding streams for Women's Legal Services and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services. These services support legal assistance for women, including legal representation, support and advocacy, as well as culturally safe wraparound services to First Nations victims and survivors experiencing, at risk of and recovering from, family, domestic and sexual violence.

Gender analysis in practice: National Access to Justice Partnership

The \$3.9 billion NAJP will have a positive impact on gender equality by assisting women escaping gender-based violence, through increasing essential frontline legal services and providing targeted support for women most at risk, particularly First Nations women.

The NAJP will provide \$833 million over five years to Community Legal Centres, with \$275.7 million specifically for Women's Legal Services and \$366.8 million for Family Violence Prevention Legal Services. This funding will increase frontline specialist legal assistance to prevent and respond to the gender-based violence crisis, helping to keep women and children safe and accelerating the Government's efforts to end family, domestic and sexual violence in one generation.

Funding will also help to address pay disparity within the legal assistance sector by narrowing the gap between the female-dominated community legal sector and Legal Aid Commissions. In the community legal sector, 70 per cent of legal practitioners identify as female, with this increasing to between 80 per cent to 90 per cent for Family Violence Prevention Legal Services employees. In the Independent Review of the National Legal Assistance Partnership, submissions pointed to the median income for community legal sector employees being 15-20 per cent lower than their counterparts at Legal Aid Commissions.³ The NAJP will see the Commonwealth, states and territories develop, in consultation with the legal assistance sector, a workforce strategy, including examining the extent of pay disparity within the legal assistance sector, the reduction in pay disparity over time and the effect on supply and demand for a skilled legal assistance workforce. The Government has committed ongoing funding beyond the five-year life of the NAJP which will provide greater stability and financial certainty for the sector and workforce.

Delivering support for remote First Nations communities in the Northern Territory

First Nations people face unique barriers in accessing formal support with estimates suggesting that around 90 per cent of violence against First Nations women is undisclosed. These challenges, including a lack of access to transportation and communication channels, are compounded for First Nations women and children living in remote communities.

The Government delivers support for critical services in remote First Nations communities in the Northern Territory through the Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment. This covers remote policing, child and family services, Aboriginal interpreter services, alcohol harm reduction services, and education programs. In February 2025, the Government signed a new Partnership Agreement to strengthen remote services in the Northern Territory.

Budget highlight: Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment

The Government is investing \$842.6 million over six years from 2025–26 to deliver the Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment, in partnership with the Northern Territory Government and the Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory. This funding includes investment for critical services and infrastructure that support the safety and wellbeing of First Nations women, children and families.

It includes new investment in Aboriginal Community Controlled Children and Family Centres to enable First Nations women and communities to determine their own solutions to complex issues, recognising First Nations communities' strengths and knowledge of what is required to improve the safety and wellbeing of First Nations families. As a result, services for First Nations women and families will be better targeted and more culturally responsive in the future.

To address the higher rates of family and domestic violence in the Northern Territory, there will also be additional funding for remote policing, women's safety, and community development and mediation initiatives.

Housing security for women in crisis

Family and domestic violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women and children, with 45 per cent of all women and girls seeking homelessness assistance identifying family and domestic violence as a cause.

Delivery of crisis, transitional, social and affordable housing for vulnerable Australians, including women and children impacted by violence, continues through initiatives such as the recently launched \$1 billion National Housing Infrastructure Facility – Crisis and Transitional Housing, the \$100 million Crisis and Transitional Accommodation Program under the Housing Australia Future Fund, and the \$9.3 billion provided under National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness. In February 2025, the Government

announced that as part of the Crisis and Transitional Accommodation Program, 42 projects across Australia will be offered funding totalling \$100 million to build new crisis and transitional homes for women and children experiencing family and domestic violence, and older women at risk of homelessness. Together, these investments are helping to reduce the strain on the crisis accommodation system, reduce unmet need for transitional housing, and strengthen pathways into longer-term housing.

Budget highlights: Frontline crisis accommodation

Funding of \$2.5 million in 2025–26 will be reallocated to extend the Safe Places Emergency Accommodation Program and support the completion of three projects.

The Safe Places Program provides capital works grants to support the renovation, building or purchase of new emergency accommodation for women and children experiencing family and domestic violence. The Safe Places program has already been provided funding of \$172.6 million and when completed will support around 1,500 safe places for women and children experiencing family and domestic violence.

Empowering people to leave violent relationships through financial support packages

Financial insecurity is another major barrier for women escaping violence, often driving them to remain with, or return to, an abusive partner. To help overcome this, the Government has committed \$925.2 million to establish the new and permanent Leaving Violence Program, which will commence on 1 July 2025. This program will provide critical support to victim-survivors of intimate partner violence, including migrants regardless of visa status, through individualised financial support packages of up to \$5,000 which will be indexed annually to keep pace with the cost of living. Those eligible will also have access to safety planning, risk assessments, and short-term referral support services for up to 12 weeks. The Leaving Violence Program is expected to provide financial support packages to approximately 36,000 victim-survivors each year.

This program builds on the successes and learnings from the Escaping Violence Payment trial and the Temporary Visa Holders Experiencing Violence Pilot, providing certainty for victim-survivors, service providers and the broader family, domestic and sexual violence sector.

Strengthening systems responses to violence

Supporting frontline services is a vital part of the fight against the gender-based violence crisis. However, broader structural changes are required to drive lasting change across the private and public sectors, including justice, government and financial systems, to ensure systems can protect the women and children who rely on them. Perpetrators can misuse and exploit weaknesses within systems to inflict abuse, worsen coercive control, and

deepen trauma for victim-survivors. Addressing the design of systems which enable such abuse can drive reform and enhance efforts to stop violence before it starts.

Improving justice system responses to sexual violence

Women who have experienced sexual violence should be properly supported to engage with the justice system when they seek help, and the system should minimise the extent of any re-traumatisation. One in five women in Australia have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15, however, only 13 per cent of these women reported their most recent assault to the police.⁴ For women who do report, justice is rarely obtained as attrition rates are high, prosecution rates are low, and conviction rates are even lower.

The Government is committed to ensuring the justice system supports victim-survivors to access justice, including strengthening legal frameworks and justice sector capability, and supporting research and greater collaboration. To inform work to strengthen legal frameworks and protections for victim-survivors, the Government has delivered a national review and comparative analysis of sexual assault and child sexual abuse legislation across Australia. A national education resource for the justice sector was also released, presenting evidence-based insights into the realities of sexual assault and suggesting approaches to counteract the inappropriate influence that false assumptions and stereotypes can have in the justice system.

In December 2024, the Government passed the *Crimes Amendment (Strengthening the Criminal Justice Response to Sexual Violence) Act 2024* to ensure additional protections are provided for vulnerable people, including victim-survivors, when appearing as witnesses in Commonwealth criminal proceedings. The legislation will provide greater support to vulnerable people, minimising the risk of re-traumatisation for witnesses through mechanisms such as evidence recording hearings, and ensuring victim-survivors can speak out about their experiences publicly should they wish to do so.

These changes complement the \$14.7 million provided in the 2023–24 Budget to strengthen the way the criminal justice system responds to sexual assault and prevent harm, including to establish the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) Inquiry into Justice Responses to Sexual Violence. On 22 January 2025, the ALRC provided Government with its report which found that the justice system is failing to meet the twin goals of access to justice and perpetrator accountability. As an immediate first step in response to this important report, investments in this Budget will address barriers to justice for victim-survivors of sexual violence.

Recognising the role of health services in responding to victim-survivors, the Government has also expanded an existing family and domestic violence pilot to provide increased support to primary care providers to assist victim-survivors of family, domestic and sexual violence. There is now a Supporting the Primary Care response to Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Primary Health Network Pilot established in every state and territory. This will help increase skills of staff in primary care to better identify, care for and refer people who have experienced sexual violence and child sexual abuse, as well as family and domestic violence.

Budget highlights: Strengthening Justice System Responses to Sexual Violence

The Government is committing \$21.4 million over three years from 2025–26 for immediate, targeted measures to improve victim and survivor engagement with the justice system and inform a broader response to the ALRC Inquiry into Justice System Responses to Sexual Violence. This package includes \$19.6 million to extend the current specialised trauma informed sexual assault legal services pilots in Victoria, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory and expand the pilots to other jurisdictions. The pilots will include trialling new non-legal support services recommended by the ALRC, including culturally safe justice system navigators and supporting access to restorative justice pathways. Funding of \$0.6 million is also being provided for targeted research to understand systemic issues related to withdrawal of complaints and police accountability.

\$1.2 million over two years from 2025–26 is being provided to extend and expand the scope of the lived experience Expert Advisory Group and support engagement with a range of sectorial stakeholders and experts to provide advice on further implementation the ALRC's recommendations.

The ALRC's report makes clear that reform is complex and will take careful consideration. The Government is carefully considering the report's recommendations and will work closely with states and territories, experts and people with lived experience through the Expert Advisory Group to consider a longer-term response.

Improving family law responses to violence

Risk of family violence is present in more than 80 per cent of parenting matters before family courts. For many victim-survivors, family law processes can be used to enact further harm and can leave them traumatised. To improve the experience of victim-survivors in the family law systems, the Government has legislated a range of significant reforms since the 2022–23 October Budget.

Reforms contained in the *Family Law Amendment Act 2023* and the *Family Law Amendment (Information Sharing) Act 2023* came into effect in May 2024. These important reforms make Australia's family law system simpler, safer and easier for separating families and their children. Significantly, the law is now much clearer that when resolving parenting disputes, what is in the best interests of the child should always be the central focus.

From 10 June 2025, significant reforms to the *Family Law Act 1975* will take effect and will focus on the financial and property aspects of relationship breakdown including by ensuring women who are victim-survivors of family violence are able to achieve a fair division of property after separation. The reforms will enable family law courts to consider the economic impact of family violence and the housing needs of children when determining how property is to be divided. The reforms will also enable family law courts to take into account the impact of family violence when considering orders for the provision of maintenance.

MYEFO highlight: Improving access in the Family Law System

The Government will provide \$44.5 million over three years from 2025–26 (and \$15.2 million per year ongoing) to the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia to continue providing family law case management services to improve outcomes for vulnerable groups and victims of family and domestic violence. This ongoing funding will ensure the family law system is safe for vulnerable parties and children, particularly in circumstances involving family violence and risk of harm.

Innovative systems responses to target perpetrators of family and domestic violence

Prevention efforts and supports for victim-survivors across systems cannot end gender-based violence without strong and targeted responses to perpetrators of violence, who are overwhelmingly men. Innovative and targeted approaches across systems which better identify and manage perpetrators and those at risk of perpetrating are required to stop violence and will bolster Government's efforts to improve community education on consent, especially for men and boys.

In line with the National Plan, work is underway to better identify high-risk and serial perpetrators, share information about them across systems and state boundaries, and intervene early to stop violence escalating. The Government has already provided \$25 million in funding to roll out innovative perpetrator responses. As an example, this is funding intensive case management and holistic support for people held on remand or on a short sentence in Tasmania, and in South Australia it is supporting adolescents engaged in youth justice who use violence in their intimate partner and family relationships. Investment of \$109.9 million in the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission is also supporting enhanced collaboration and information sharing through the continued integration of state and territory law enforcement agencies into the National Criminal Intelligence System. These are examples of the Government's action on a whole of system response that integrates processes across law enforcement, justice responses and services including men's behaviour change.

MYEFO highlights: Responding to high-risk and serial perpetrators

The Government is addressing a key priority from the 6 September 2024 National Cabinet by committing \$82.4 million over four years from 2024–25 to strengthen justice responses to high-risk and serial perpetrators of family and domestic violence. This involves:

- \$2.0 million over three years to develop new national best-practice risk assessment principles and a model best-practice risk assessment framework
- \$0.6 million over two years to improve information sharing across systems and jurisdictions through enhancements to the National Criminal Intelligence System
- \$50.6 million over four years to work with states and territories to expand and increase nationally consistent, two-way information sharing between family law courts and state and territory courts, child protection, policing and firearms agencies
- \$28.6 million over four years to trial two innovative models, Domestic Violence Threat Assessment Centres and focused deterrence, which will use evidence-based policing to detect, monitor and intervene with high-risk and serial domestic violence offenders
- \$0.6 million over two years to conduct critical research on bail, remand, parole and sentencing with regard to risk of intimate partner homicide; and improving the operation of court-mandated behaviour change programs and their interaction with justice systems.

Reviewing government and financial systems misused to perpetrate violence

Around 16 per cent of women in Australia (approximately 1.6 million women) have experienced economic abuse from a current or previous partner. As acknowledged in the Rapid Review report, there is growing evidence of perpetrators of family and domestic violence attempting to exploit and manipulate government and financial systems to control, threaten or harass a current or former partner. This systems abuse is often part of a pattern of coercive control and financial abuse, which can cause economic hardship, costly and lengthy legal proceedings, and emotional and administrative burdens for victim survivors, making it difficult to rebuild their lives after leaving a violent relationship.

The Government is also undertaking an audit of Commonwealth systems to identify where they are being weaponised by perpetrators of family and domestic violence. In addition, the *Family Law Act 1975* was amended to include 'economic or financial abuse' as an example of behaviour that might constitute family violence. It will also introduce protections against the misuse or weaponising of health, sexual assault and family violence information during family law proceedings.

MYEFO highlight: Audit of Commonwealth systems

The Government is conducting an audit of key Commonwealth systems to identify areas being weaponised by perpetrators, and how they could be strengthened to improve safety. With a focus on the child support, social security and tax systems, the audit will identify the highest impact interventions and system improvements that will make the most difference in protecting and supporting victim survivors of gender-based violence and preventing systems abuse, so the systems are safe and work as intended for all Australians.

This work complements and builds on the inquiry by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services into financial abuse delivered in December 2024; the Inspector-General of Taxation's investigation into identification and management of financial abuse within the tax system, due in March 2025; and reviews into operation of the child support system.

Making online platforms and services safer for women

Women are more likely to experience ongoing technology-based abuse than men, with online systems abuse now happening at scale. Around three quarters of all women who use online dating apps have experienced at least one form of dating app facilitated sexual violence, and 57 per cent of women who experienced sexual harassment in the last 12 months experienced it online. This abuse is often severe and damaging in its psychological impact, leaving women twice as likely (26.3 per cent) to fear for their safety compared to men (12.3 per cent).

Significant advancements continue to be made to improve the online safety of women and children. Recognising the risk of technology-based abuse is even higher for First Nations women and girls, a \$600,000 priority pool is available under the Preventing Tech-based Abuse of Women Grants Program for projects that support First Nations women.

The Government has also legislated to strengthen privacy protections for all Australians, including women experiencing family and domestic violence. The reforms created a statutory tort which will allow women to seek direct redress for serious breaches of their privacy, including against perpetrators of family and domestic violence. The reforms also created new criminal offences to outlaw doxxing with serious criminal penalties of up to seven years imprisonment. Doxxing is a form of abuse that can affect all Australians but is often used against women in the context of family and domestic violence.

Ensuring safe education and workplaces for women

Strengthened responses to violence in higher education

The Government has also enacted significant reforms to improve responses to sexual violence in higher education and to support the Action Plan Addressing Gender-based Violence in Higher Education (Action Plan) agreed with states and territories.

From 1 February 2025, an independent National Student Ombudsman has been established under this Action Plan, allowing all higher education students to escalate complaints about the actions of their higher education provider, including complaints about sexual harassment, assault and violence. The Government has also introduced legislation to establish a National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence, which will set standards and requirements that all higher education providers must meet to make students and staff safer.

Supporting workplace responses to domestic violence

Family, domestic and sexual violence does not just impact women's safety and wellbeing but can also impact their employment and economic security. Recent research indicates that over a third of people who experience partner violence have taken time off work related to that violence, and this increases for women who had children in their care.

In recognition of this, all eligible employees, regardless of whether they are full-time, part-time or casual, can access ten days of paid family and domestic violence leave. This is an increase from the previous National Employment Standards entitlement of five days of unpaid family and domestic violence leave a year. A recent independent review found that this leave provision is succeeding in supporting the financial security of those escaping or experiencing violence.⁵ Of those surveyed who had taken paid family and domestic violence leave, 91 per cent said it helped them maintain their income. Workplace protections have also increased for victim-survivors under the *Fair Work Act 2009*, following the Government's change to prohibit an employer from taking adverse action against an employee, or potential employee, because of family and domestic violence.

Preventing sexual harassment at work

All women have the right to a safe and respectful workplace. Yet too many people still experience workplace sexual harassment, with data from 2022 showing that one in three Australians had been sexually harassed at work in the last 5 years, and 41 per cent of women had experienced this harassment.

The Government has been deeply committed to implementing all recommendations of the *Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report*. In 2022, legislation passed to implement outstanding recommendations from the *Respect@Work* report, which importantly introduced a positive duty on employers to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate unlawful sex discrimination, including sexual harassment, as far as

possible. In addition, the Commonwealth undertook further consultation on an appropriate cost model for Commonwealth anti-discrimination law and implemented this model through legislation passed in September 2024. This finalised the legislative reform required to implement all recommendations of the *Respect@Work* report.

As part of the Government's Secure Jobs, Better Pay legislation, the *Fair Work Act 2009* was amended to prohibit sexual harassment in connection with work, including in the workplace. These changes have been in place since March 2023. The Fair Work Commission has also been given greater powers to deal with workplace sexual harassment.

The Government has also worked across the Parliament on implementation of recommendations from *Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces*. All recommendations of this report are now ongoing or implemented, with the Government establishing the new Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission in October 2024. The establishment of the Commission means that the Behaviour Standards for Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces and Codes of Conduct for parliamentarians and staff can now be independently enforced. These Codes recognise that parliamentarians and their staff have a shared responsibility to ensure that Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces meet the highest standards of integrity, dignity, safety and mutual respect.

Budget highlight: Strengthening reporting of workplace sexual harassment

This Budget provides \$1.4 million in 2025–26 for the Workplace Gender Equality Agency and Australian Public Service Commission to support continued work on public sector reporting requirements, including for workplace sexual harassment, which supports the continued implementation of Recommendation 43 of the *Respect@Work* report.

Unpaid and paid care

Key statistics

<p>Hours spent participating in physical and emotional care for children per day (2020–2021)⁶</p> <p>Female parents: 3 hours 34 minutes Male parents: 2 hours 19 minutes</p>	<p>Part-time employment (February 2025)</p> <p>42.7% of employed women work part-time 20.4% of employed men work part-time</p>
<p>Women make up 67.7% of primary carers (2022)⁷</p>	<p>68% of employers offer employer-funded parental leave (2023–24)</p> <p>86% of primary carers who take employer-funded parental leave are women (2023–24)⁸</p>
<p>85% of the care and support workforce are women (2021)⁹</p>	<p>Over 40% of registered nurses and aged and disabled carers were born overseas, higher than the average of 32% across all occupations (2021)</p>

Unpaid and paid care makes a substantial contribution to families, the community, and the economy, yet it is undervalued. Caregiving remains predominantly performed by women, who spend an average of nine hours more per week on unpaid care than men, and who comprise around 85 per cent of the formal care and support economy. Valuing all forms of care, both socially and financially, is fundamental to achieving gender equality in Australia. In line with *Working for Women*, the Government is committed to helping families balance work and care responsibilities, and to better valuing unpaid and paid care and support work in Australia.

Valuing and sharing unpaid care

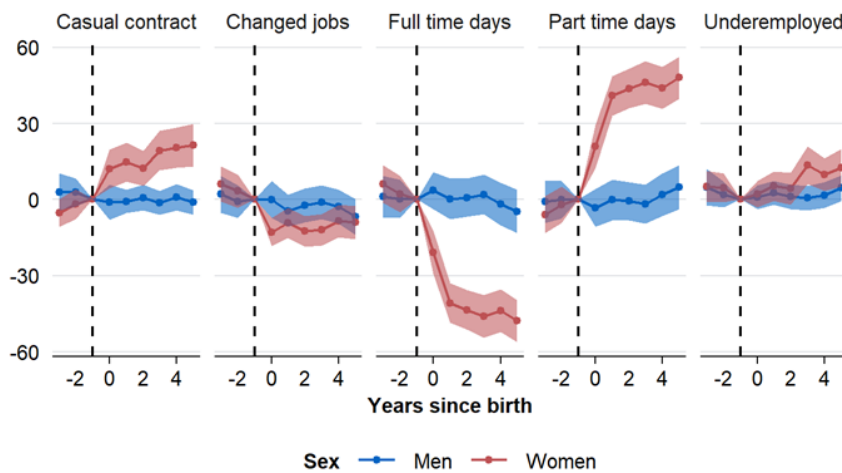
Gendered divisions of paid and unpaid work are prevalent in the Australian economy and broader society. The economic and social contribution of unpaid work is undervalued and may be less visible due to traditional gender attitudes and stereotypes around women and girls being 'natural' caregivers. This unpaid care is not just for children, but also ageing parents, other family members, and people with disability.

The Government funded the ABS to expand the Labour Account to improve estimates on the total hours spent on unpaid care and the monetary value of unpaid care activities. Early estimates found the value of unpaid child care to be \$55.6 billion in the June quarter 2021, with women contributing 69 per cent of these services.

A more even share of care between parents has benefits for women, men, and children. It can free up mothers to further participate in the workforce and can give fathers more time to spend with their children, with research finding care from both parents is important for childhood development and has positive health benefits for fathers. Along with a more even distribution of unpaid care, access to early childhood education and care also plays an important role in enabling parents – particularly mothers – to choose their preferred balance of work and care, while also being important for child development.

Helping families balance caring responsibilities and closing the gender pay gap are key objectives of *Working for Women*. These goals are deeply intertwined, with one-third of the gender pay gap attributable to women taking time out of the workforce to care for family and other interruptions in full-time employment.¹⁰ Treasury analysis has shown entering parenthood has a large and persistent effect on the gender earnings gap, reducing female annual earnings by 53 per cent, on average, in the first five years of parenthood. This divergence in earnings following entry into parenthood is often termed the ‘motherhood penalty’ (or ‘child penalty’) and is driven by reductions in women’s workforce participation, working hours, and wage growth following parenthood. One driver of the motherhood penalty could be flow-on consequences from career breaks and requiring flexibility in working hours to balance care responsibilities.

Figure 1: Effects of children on selected job outcomes, by sex
Ppt



Source: Treasury analysis of Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey, waves 1-19.
Note: Shaded areas show 95 per cent confidence intervals.

Figure 1 shows that following parenthood, conditional on employment, women experience a 40 percentage point fall in the likelihood of working full-time days and a similar rise in

the likelihood of working part-time or variable days. Over time, women are more likely to be employed on a casual basis and to experience underemployment. Women are also less likely to change jobs over time, which may suggest they are restricted from taking up new opportunities because of requirements for flexible work. Previous Treasury research has shown job-to-job transitions are an important driver of wage growth.¹¹ Figure 1 suggests care-related barriers are causing mothers to work fewer hours than they would like and may be limiting their job opportunities. The analysis also suggests parenthood appears to have no or only a negligible impact on men's employment outcomes.

While these trends apply broadly to women with children, caring responsibilities differ markedly based on characteristics such as whether women are partnered or demographic factors. In particular, single mothers have lower participation rates than their male counterparts and mothers in couple families, with 68 per cent of single mothers employed compared with 75 per cent of single fathers and 78 per cent of mothers in couple families with dependants. Greater caring responsibilities for some women can also stem from cultural, religious or community expectations. For instance, 61 per cent of First Nations women provide support to someone living outside of their household and nearly two-thirds of these women also live in a household with dependent children.¹² Furthermore, for some First Nations women, caring responsibilities extend to protecting and caring for Country, which remains an important part of daily life and practice.¹³

It is widely acknowledged that the disproportionate levels of care women provide as primary carers have significant impacts on their lifelong economic security. This includes negative effects on pay and lifetime earnings, resulting in lower superannuation accumulation and higher risks of poverty in older age. Unpaid care can also negatively impact women's career progression and representation in leadership roles, especially for those who work part-time and/or flexibly to manage caring responsibilities.

Gender stereotypes and expectations also contribute to the imbalance in caring responsibilities in families, with women expected to take on most of this work. Men who want to take on more care may face difficulty or discrimination accessing leave or flexible work. Gendered assumptions about parenting can also make it harder for same sex and gender non-binary parents to navigate care roles, parenting services and workplace entitlements and support.

More support for working families

The Government is making it easier for parents to balance caring for their children with other parts of their lives and encouraging more equal sharing of caring responsibilities between parents. Key reforms include significant investments in Paid Parental Leave (PPL) and early childhood education and care.

The Government is expanding PPL in a way that addresses the needs of working Australian families, provides greater security and flexibility, and empowers the full and equal participation of women in the workforce. As part of the Government's largest expansion to PPL, the scheme will increase to 24 weeks from 1 July 2025 and 26 weeks from 1 July 2026. In addition to providing families with more leave, the changes also provide

greater flexibility for families and support more equal sharing of parenting and household responsibilities. This is in part through increasing the amount of leave parents can take together and extending reserved weeks available for each parent (sole parents receive the full entitlement). The Government will also pay superannuation on Government-funded PPL for babies born or adopted on or after 1 July 2025.

Cameos: How the Paid Parental Leave scheme can support parents to share care

Example 1: Leila and Sam are a couple and their second child is born on 10 July 2025. Leila is self-employed and Sam works casually. Both worked more than 330 hours over a ten-month period prior to the birth of their child and they meet the income test.

Prior to the Government's changes to the PPL scheme, which took effect from 1 July 2023, Leila and Sam would have only had access to 18 weeks of Parental Leave Pay and two weeks of Dad and Partner Pay. Now, Leila and Sam can share 24 weeks of PPL – around \$22,000 at current rates. This means Leila and Sam will share an extra four weeks of PPL (which equates to over \$3,600 at current rates).

Leila and Sam have decided to share the PPL entitlement equally, with each accessing 12 weeks of the payment. Leila plans to use her share of the PPL entitlement flexibly by taking a continuous block following the birth of their child and then multiple shorter blocks as she and Sam balance caring for the child and their returns to part-time work. Sam and Leila will both receive an additional 12 per cent of their PPL payments as a contribution to their nominated superannuation funds.

Example 2: Sofia is a sole parent and her first child is born on 20 July 2025. Sofia works full-time.

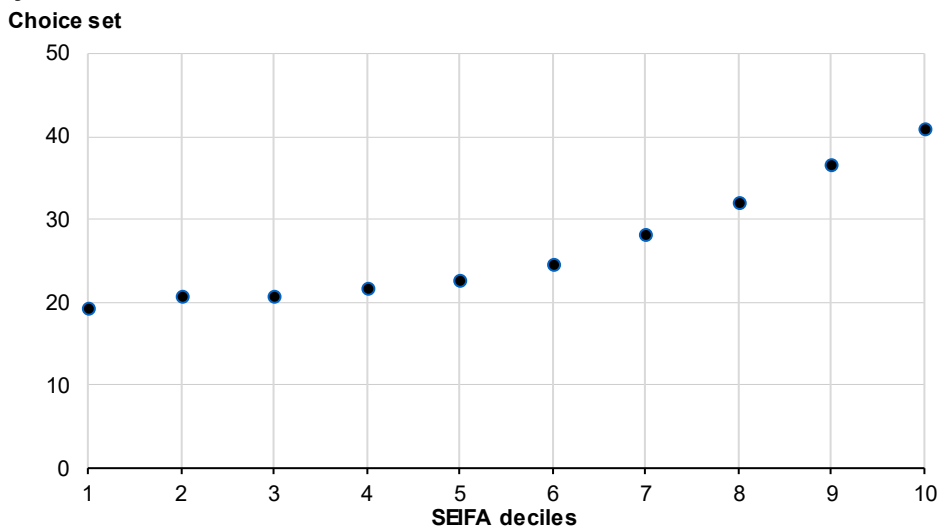
Prior to the changes to the PPL scheme, which took effect from 1 July 2023, Sofia would have been entitled to 18 weeks of PPL. From 1 July 2025, Sofia will be entitled to the total 24 weeks of PPL available. This means Sofia will receive an extra six weeks of PPL (which equates to around \$5,500 at current rates), which she can also complement with any employer-funded parental leave. Sofia will also receive an additional 12 per cent of her PPL payments as a contribution to her nominated superannuation fund.

As well as PPL settings, access to affordable early childhood education and care can influence how parents balance work and care. Households often factor the cost of child care against the earnings of the mother, a reflection of assumptions that care is primarily the role of women and of women's lower earnings. For women who are working, the cost of child care can be a factor in influencing decisions to work part-time.

Among parents who reported facing a barrier to work or to working more hours in 2022–23, 55 per cent nominated ‘caring for children’ as their main reason. Among these parents, 70 per cent said they preferred to care for their children or their children were too young or old for child care. The remaining 30 per cent nominated child care-related barriers, including cost, availability and quality. If all child care-related barriers were reduced, the parents in this group might be able to increase their labour supply, which would see the labour force expand by 143,000 full-time equivalent workers (noting other factors could still limit labour force participation).

Access to early childhood education and care varies across Australia. Figure 2 shows the average number of early childhood education and care centres within ten minutes of driving time for areas within each Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) decile. SEIFA deciles show the socio-economic status of an area, with lower decile values being more disadvantaged and less advantaged areas. Families living in higher SEIFA deciles have greater choice of early childhood education and care centres. On average, the number of centres within ten minutes driving time almost doubles between the least and most advantaged areas.

Figure 2: Mean number of child care centres within ten minutes driving time, by SEIFA decile



Source: Treasury analysis of ACECQA data “Q2 2024”; ABS Census 2021.

Notes: Driving time is calculated from the centre of each SA1. Choice is the mean number of child care centres within ten minutes driving time for SA1s in each SEIFA decile.

The Government is committed to building a universal early childhood education and care system that is simple and affordable for every family. In the 2024–25 MYEFO, the Government invested \$5.0 billion over five years from 2024–25 in early childhood education and care. The Government has also reduced out-of-pocket costs for more than one million Australian families through Cheaper Child Care, which from July 2023 lifted Child Care Subsidy rates for families earning less than \$530,000.

MYEFO highlights: Building a universal early childhood education and care system

To support parents and carers to access affordable and high-quality early childhood education and care services, the Government is investing in building a universal early childhood education and care system. This includes:

- \$3.6 billion over four years from 2024–25 to support a wage increase for the early childhood education and care workforce through a worker retention payment. This will support a wage increase of 10 per cent on top of the current national award rate in the first year from December 2024 and a further 5 per cent in the second year from December 2025
- \$1.0 billion over five years from 2024–25 to establish the Building Early Education Fund, including provisioning \$500 million for future investments. This will see more centres built and expanded in areas of need, including in the outer suburbs and regional Australia, and will enable a business case to be undertaken for the Government to invest in owning and leasing a portfolio of centres
- \$426.6 million over four years from 2025–26 for the 3 Day Guarantee, which will replace the Child Care Subsidy Activity Test from January 2026 to ensure families are eligible for at least three days of Child Care Subsidy per week for early childhood education and care. Legislation to give effect to this change passed parliament on 13 February 2025
- \$10.4 million over three years from 2024–25 to develop an Early Education Service Delivery Price to better understand the cost of delivering services around the country and underpin future reform.

These reforms are an important step towards improving the accessibility, affordability and simplicity of early childhood education and care. Together they provide parents, particularly women, with greater choice to care and work to their preferred levels.

Gender analysis in practice: Child Care Subsidy – 3 Day Guarantee

The Government is improving access to affordable early childhood education and care by replacing the Child Care Subsidy Activity Test from January 2026 to guarantee eligibility for at least three days of subsidised early childhood education and care each week (72 hours per fortnight) for Child Care Subsidy eligible families. Families caring for a First Nations child will be eligible for 100 hours of subsidised care per fortnight. The 3 Day Guarantee will positively impact gender equality by providing cost-of-living relief for families, particularly single mothers and lower-income families, and removing barriers to women choosing how they balance caring responsibilities with other priorities.

By replacing the Activity Test, the Government has lifted the base number of subsidised hours families are eligible for regardless of their level of activity. This change was informed by feedback from stakeholders representing First Nations people who stated the previous Activity Test presented an extra barrier to First Nations families already facing challenges accessing early childhood education and care.

Gender analysis concluded the 3 Day Guarantee will largely benefit women who primarily undertake unpaid care responsibilities. In particular, the 3 Day Guarantee will positively benefit unemployed single mothers and their children who will receive access to more subsidised hours than previously available. The 3 Day Guarantee increases access to subsidised hours, removing a barrier to their children accessing the benefits of early childhood education and care.

ABS data indicates some women may want to work but are unable to do so as the cost or availability of early childhood education and care is a barrier. The 3 Day Guarantee will enable women to access the Child Care Subsidy and participate or increase their participation in work, study, or volunteering, to their preferred levels. The 3 Day Guarantee also provides more certainty for women with unpredictable working patterns, for example if they work seasonally or periodically, about their entitlement to the Child Care Subsidy. Women working less than 48 hours per fortnight can rely on 72 subsidised hours of care regardless of how these hours fluctuate.

Bolstering supports for carers

For many women, unpaid care also includes caring for ageing parents or other family members, including people with disability, chronic health conditions, and mental illness. 54 per cent of these carers are women and this increases to 68 per cent for primary carers. In December 2024, the Government released its National Carer Strategy 2024–2034 (the Strategy) and accompanying Action Plan. The Strategy sets the direction for Government efforts to improve the lives of Australia's unpaid carers, including to support their health and wellbeing and to remain connected to economic and social opportunities. The Action Plan addresses priority areas of the Strategy and introduces practical and vital additional supports for carers. These supports empower carers to engage in workforce, education, or training opportunities and ensure carers can access necessary services and supports at a time and way that suits their needs.

As announced in the 2024–25 Budget, the Government has made changes to the participation rules for the Carer Payment, which took effect from 20 March 2025. Recognising carers are more likely to work in insecure casual work, leading to intermittent engagement with work, the new rules allow up to 100 hours of work over a four-week period instead of 25 hours per week, and remove travel time, education, and volunteering from the work limit. This change aims to provide carers with flexibility to balance work and study with their caring responsibilities, promoting long-term benefits such as increased income and superannuation, and improved health, mental and social wellbeing.

Strengthening the care and support sector

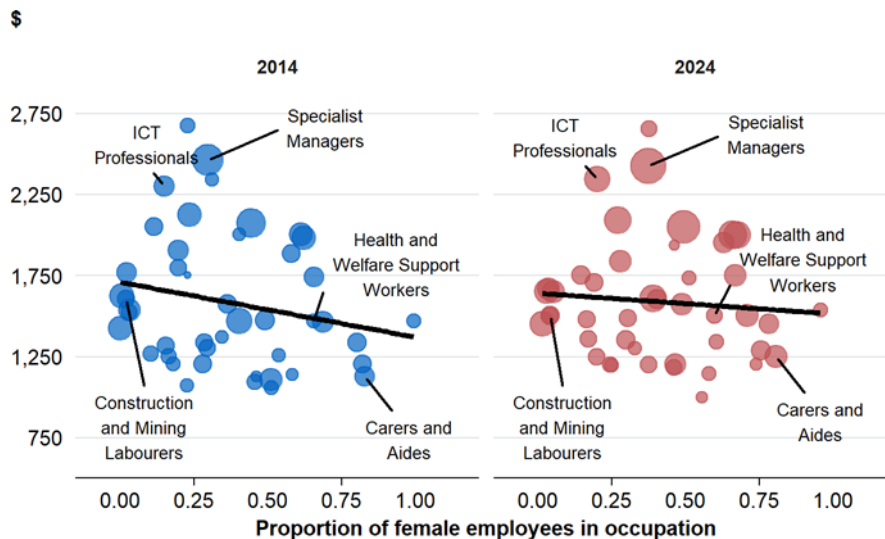
Care and support workers provide a vital service to Australia's economy and broader society. However, they can face challenges such as low pay and job insecurity, with a high proportion employed as casuals or contractors compared to the economy-wide average. In addition, in 2021, over 40 per cent of registered nurses and aged and disabled carers were born overseas. This is higher than the average of 32 per cent across all occupations and suggests care and support workers are more likely to experience intersecting forms of disadvantage. Australia is facing workforce shortages in the care and support economy, leading to care gaps for care recipients. To attract the necessary workforce, caring work must be properly valued, which should be reflected by appropriate pay and conditions. Fair pay in these historically undervalued sectors helps attract new workers, retain current workers, and close the gender pay gap.

In this Budget, the Government continues to recognise paid care as an essential service for Australia and drive progress towards a sustainable and productive care and support economy that delivers quality care and support, with quality jobs. Reforms to care and support systems have a two-fold impact on women's economic equality. Given 85 per cent of workers in the care and support economy are women, positive changes to remuneration policies support efforts to narrow the gender pay gap and attract new workers to the sector. An effective formal care and support system also benefits women, given they are more likely to provide informal and unpaid care when formal services are not available.

Making remuneration fairer in the care professions and sectors

Gendered undervaluation of feminised industries is well-established and perpetuates economic inequality. The perception of care and support work as ‘unskilled’ exposes it to potential wage undervaluation, as the skills and expertise required to deliver care are overlooked and misunderstood. Across the economy, occupations with a larger share of women tend to have lower wages (Figure 3). Although differences in pay between male- and female-dominated occupations are less stark today than a decade ago, many female-dominated care sector occupations, such as carers and aides, earn less than other occupations.

Figure 3: Average full-time weekly earnings, by 2-digit occupation and proportion of women working in occupation



Source: ABS Characteristics of employment, 2024.

Note: Earnings are inflated to 2024 dollars with average weekly earnings. The size of the bubbles reflects the number of employees in each occupation.

The Government is committed to supporting the fair remuneration of the care sector and is investing in wage increases for workers in aged care and early childhood education and care. Valuing care workforces will reduce the gender pay gap and support worker attraction and retention in a market facing workforce shortages.

Budget and MYEFO highlights: Wage increases for aged care nurses

Over successive Budgets the Government has invested \$17.7 billion to deliver on its commitment to support the Fair Work Commission's decisions under the Aged Care Work Value Case. This includes:

- in the 2025–26 Budget, \$2.6 billion for further award wage increases for aged care nurses from 1 March 2025
- in the 2024–25 MYEFO, \$3.8 billion for the award wage increases from 1 January 2025 (Stage 3)
- in the 2023–24 Budget, \$11.3 billion for the 15 per cent award wage increases, which commenced 30 June 2023 (Stage 2).

As a result of the Fair Work Commission's decisions, all aged care workers under the Aged Care Award 2010; Schedule F of the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010 (SCHADS Award); and Nurses Award 2020 are receiving award wage increases. This is around 400,000 workers. Aged care workers benefitting from the award wage increases include:

- registered nurses, enrolled nurses, nurse practitioners, and assistants in nursing
- personal care workers, recreational activities officers, and ancillary staff (such as administration staff, gardeners, laundry hands, cleaners head chefs, cooks, and food service assistants)
- home care aged care workers.

Hourly award wage rates have increased significantly as a direct result of the Government's support for the Aged Care Work Value Case. For instance, for a registered nurse (level 2, 1–3 years of experience) the hourly award wage rate has increased by \$9.54 and for an aged care employee (direct care – level 3 – qualified) it has increased by \$6.25.¹⁴ These wage increases will particularly benefit women, who comprise 86 per cent of the aged care workforce.

MYEFO highlights: Wage increase for early childhood education and care workers

In the 2024–25 MYEFO, the Government provided \$3.6 billion over four years from 2024–25 to support a wage increase for the early childhood education and care workforce through a worker retention payment. This will support a wage increase of 10 per cent on top of the current national award rate in the first year from December 2024 and a further 5 per cent in the second year from December 2025.

The Government is also providing \$10.0 million in 2024–25 to sector peak bodies, employer organisations, and employee representative organisations to assist providers and their staff to engage with the worker retention payment.

On 7 December 2022, the Government's legislation to make gender equality an objective of the *Fair Work Act 2009* came into effect. These reforms embedded the principle of gender equality in the Fair Work Commission's decision-making processes and strengthened the Fair Work Commission's ability to award pay rises for equal remuneration or work value reasons, including to address gender-based undervaluation of work.

On 7 June 2024, the Fair Work Commission initiated the Gender Undervaluation – Priority Awards Review (the Review), which seeks to remedy potential historical undervaluation in awards used in priority female-dominated industries. These awards are the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services Award 2020, Children's Services Award 2010, Health Professionals and Support Services Award 2020, Pharmacy Industry Award 2020, and Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010.

The Government supports this Review. On 27 September 2024, the Government made an initial submission to the Review, which was underpinned by the principles of advancing gender equality, the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, delivering consistent outcomes for workers, the need for an economically responsible phased approach to any wage increases, and balancing risks to business, workforce, and consumer outcomes.

Building a stronger workforce pipeline

Along with making the care sector more attractive by supporting fairer remuneration, the Government is acting to strengthen the workforce pipeline. A strong, diverse workforce, including with increased men's participation, will help the economy grow to meet present and future demand, break down stereotypes that care is 'women's work', and reinforce that everyone can make valuable care contributions in both formal economies and unpaid settings.

The Government is ensuring high-quality and responsive training is available for students wishing to enter the care and support sector. Through the National Skills Agreement, the Government is investing up to \$325 million over five years from 2024, with matched funding from states and territories, to establish nationally networked TAFE Centres of

Excellence to provide high-quality and responsive skills training in areas of national priority and critical and emerging industries, including sustaining essential care and support services. In 2024, governments announced the Queensland TAFE Centre of Excellence Health Care and Support and the South Australian TAFE Centre of Excellence in Early Childhood Education and Care.

The Government is also strengthening the workforce pipeline by addressing financial disincentives for students pursuing care and support qualifications. In November 2024, the Government passed legislation to introduce a Commonwealth Prac Payment, benchmarked to the single Austudy rate (\$331.65 per week, as at 1 January 2025). The new payment will be available from 1 July 2025 for eligible nursing, midwifery, teaching, and social work students undertaking mandatory placements, helping to provide cost-of-living relief and combat placement poverty. The Commonwealth Prac Payment is expected to support around 68,000 higher education students and 5,000 VET students per year. Many of these students will likely be women. In 2022, women made up 81 per cent of enrolments in teaching, nursing, midwifery, and social work higher education courses, and 84 per cent of 2022 commencements in the Diploma of Nursing.

Budget highlight: Investing in the primary health care workforce

To support the primary care workforce, the Government is investing \$10.5 million over two years from 2025–26 to expand the Primary Care Nursing and Midwifery Scholarship Program by 400 places.

Given women represent almost 90 per cent of the nursing and midwifery sector professions, women stand to benefit the most from this measure. Participants will extend their skills and qualifications and attain endorsement as a nurse practitioner or endorsed midwife.

The Government is also investing \$248.7 million over four years from 2025–26 to provide salary incentives for junior doctors and paid parental leave and study leave for trainee GPs to help compensate for the entitlements that junior doctors lose when they move out of the hospital system. Women made up 58 per cent of new GP trainees in 2024. Improved access to paid parental leave will help to address inequities between GP trainees and trainees in other medical specialties.

As well as strengthening the care sector workforce pipeline, the Government recognises the importance of supporting workers to keep growing their skills. To support the professional development of early childhood education and care workers, in the 2023–24 Budget the Government provided \$72.4 million over five years from 2022–23 to assist the sector to build and retain the workforce. This includes financial assistance for eligible educators to undertake paid practicums and a living and travel allowance for students undertaking a practicum in a rural or remote location away from their home. In October 2024, a dedicated practicum exchange website was made available to help services and students organise practicum placement opportunities.

Economic equality and security

Key statistics

<p>Workforce participation rate (February 2025)</p> <p>Women: 62.8% Men: 70.9%</p>	<p>Weekly paid hours usually worked (January 2025)</p> <p>Women: 32.0 hours Men: 38.5 hours</p>
<p>Gender segregation of Australian industries (November 2024)</p> <p>Only 10 out of 19 industries are gender balanced¹⁵</p>	<p>Full-time average weekly ordinary earnings gender pay gap (November 2024)</p> <p>11.9% or \$246.30 per week</p>
<p>Average total remuneration gender pay gap¹⁶ (2023–2024)</p> <p>21.8% or \$28,425 per year</p>	<p>Median super balance approaching retirement¹⁷ (2022–2023)</p> <p>Women: \$176,000 Men: \$233,000 Gap of 24.5% or \$57,000</p>

There have been significant improvements in women's economic equality and security in recent years. Women's workforce participation reached record highs in 2025 and the gender pay gap hit record lows in 2024.

However, gaps between women's and men's economic outcomes persist. Women still earn less than men on average, are more likely to engage in part-time, low paid and insecure work, and are more likely to have a disrupted career trajectory due to unpaid caring responsibilities. Relationship breakdown and violence can also worsen women's economic insecurity. Progress on narrowing gendered gaps has been slower for First Nations women, women with disability and migrant and refugee women, as they may experience additional and unique barriers. Experiences of economic inequality have lifelong impacts, including an inability to escape and recover from family and domestic violence, housing insecurity and homelessness, lower superannuation balances, and less security in retirement.

As set out in *Working for Women*, the Government is committed to improving economic equality and security for women and addressing structural drivers of inequality.

Since May 2022, the Government has delivered significant investments and reforms, including:

- tax cuts for every Australian taxpayer, with a focus on improving incentives to participate and supporting women to work if they want to
- Cheaper Child Care reforms and building the foundation for universal early childhood education and care
- funding to increase wages for workers in highly feminised sectors including aged care and early childhood education and care
- expanding Government-funded PPL to 26 weeks by 2026 and passing legislation for superannuation to be paid on payments made under the scheme
- boosting support for women through the income support system, including expanding eligibility of Parenting Payment Single, enhancing the flexibility of Carer Payment rules and increasing the maximum rates of Commonwealth Rent Assistance
- workplace reforms such as making gender equality an object of the *Fair Work Act 2009*, making breastfeeding a protected attribute under the *Fair Work Act 2009*, banning pay secrecy, legislating a statutory equal remuneration principle, introducing ten days of paid family and domestic violence leave, strengthening access to unpaid parental leave, legislating a right to disconnect outside working hours, and introducing a positive duty on employers to take reasonable steps to eliminate workplace sexual harassment, sex discrimination and sex-based harassment
- funding to support women's representation and opportunities in traditionally male-dominated industries, including through the Australian Skills Guarantee and the Building Women's Careers Program
- funding to support women's access to housing, including through the Social Housing Accelerator Payment, Safe Places Emergency Accommodation Program, and the National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness.

The Government is continuing to drive progress towards economic equality and security for women, including through key cost-of-living relief initiatives and measures to help address structural and long-term drivers of women's lower workforce participation rates and the gender pay gap.

Providing cost-of-living relief to women and families

While inflation is less than a third of its peak, cost-of-living pressures continue to be felt broadly across the community. Key cost-of-living relief initiatives over this Government's term include tax cuts for every taxpayer, energy bill relief for over ten million households, fairer student loans, funding pay rises for aged care workers and early childhood educators, Cheaper Child Care and investments to make health care more accessible and affordable. These measures have particularly benefitted low paid workers, who are disproportionately women, as they typically do not have savings to draw on to cover rising costs. Single women in particular are far more likely to face indicators of financial stress compared with coupled households.

The Government's tax cuts for every Australian taxpayer support women's workforce participation by reducing disincentives to take on more hours of work, especially for low- and middle-income earners, who are more likely to be women.

The Government is extending energy bill relief to help families with their power bills. This is in addition to the \$3.5 billion in energy bill relief that is already being provided to over ten million households and around one million small businesses in 2024–25.

Budget highlight: Extending energy bill relief

In this Budget, the Government is committing \$1.8 billion to extend energy bill relief for six months to December 2025. This will provide additional cost-of-living support for over ten million Australian households and around one million small businesses. Rebates of up to \$150 will directly reduce energy bills in the winter, helping households when they need it most. This relief particularly benefits women, who are over-represented in low-income households and are typically more impacted by rising living costs.

The Government has also delivered back-to-back increases in the maximum rates of Commonwealth Rent Assistance. These changes benefit nearly one million households eligible for the maximum rate, around 52 per cent of which are single women households.

To provide cost-of-living relief for Australians with student loan debts, the Government is continuing to make student loans fairer. This follows changes to the indexation of Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) and other student debts to the lower of the Consumer Price Index or the Wage Price Index. This change was backdated to 1 June 2023 and has removed \$3 billion in outstanding student debt for 3 million Australians.

MYEFO highlight: Making student loans fairer

The Government has committed to reducing HELP and other student loan debts by 20 per cent before indexation is applied on 1 June 2025, subject to the passage of legislation. This would remove \$16 billion in student loan debt.

The Government has also committed \$182.2 million over four years from 2024–25 (and \$402.3 million from 2028–29 to 2034–35) to reform the repayment system for the HELP and other student loan schemes. This will deliver a fairer student loan repayment system that is based on marginal rates and will increase the amount people can earn before they are required to start repaying their loan. This reform will take effect from 1 July 2025, subject to the passage of legislation.

These changes will benefit 1.8 million women who hold around 61 per cent of HELP debts.

Cameo: Cumulative impact of Government policy changes on women and families in 2024–25¹⁸

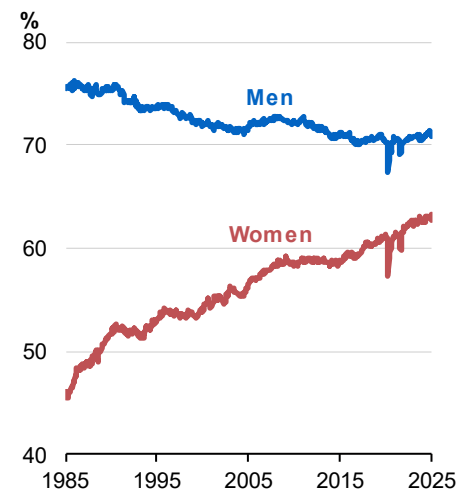
The Government's tax cuts, the Cheaper Child Care reforms, increases to Commonwealth Rent Assistance, the expansion of Parenting Payment Single eligibility, and energy bill relief have all provided cost-of-living support to low- and middle-income Australians. The Government has also boosted wages in the female-dominant sectors of early childhood education and care and aged care, through an early childhood education and care worker retention payment and funding the outcome of the Fair Work Commission's decision on the Aged Care Work Value Case.

Example: Rachael works full-time as an early childhood educator on the award wage (\$57,436). Her rent is currently \$350 per week, and she is the sole parent of a ten-year-old child who attends out-of-school-hours care five days a week. Under the Government's changes, Rachael will receive Parenting Payment Single of \$4,720, a wage increase of \$3,350 as a result of the worker retention payment, a tax cut of \$1,301, an increase in rent assistance of \$1,219, energy bill relief of \$300 and an additional \$276 in Child Care Subsidy. After the tax paid on the wage increase and Parenting Payment (Single), Rachael will receive a net benefit of \$8,489 in 2024–25, equivalent to a 13.7 per cent increase in her disposable income.

Increasing women’s workforce participation

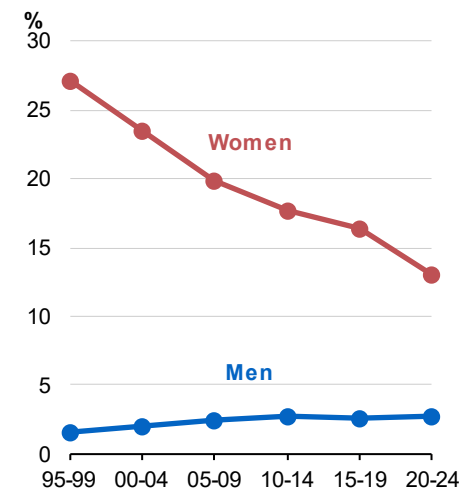
Reducing barriers to women’s workforce participation is central to improving women’s economic equality and security, with benefits also to their families and the economy. Women’s workforce participation rates reached their highest on record at 63.3 per cent in January 2025 (Figure 4.1), representing an increase of almost 20 percentage points over the past 40 years. Increased participation rates have been driven by changing social attitudes, increased educational attainment for women, increased flexibility offered by employers, and caring work moving into the formal economy. The share of middle-aged women reporting home duties or caring responsibilities to be the main reason for being outside the workforce has halved over the past three decades (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.1: Participation rates



Source: ABS Labour Force Survey

Figure 4.2: Being outside the labour force due to home duties or caring, 25-to-64-year-old



Source: Treasury analysis of ABS Labour Force Survey, Detailed; ABS Participation, Job Search and Mobility microdata; ABS Persons Not in the Labour Force.

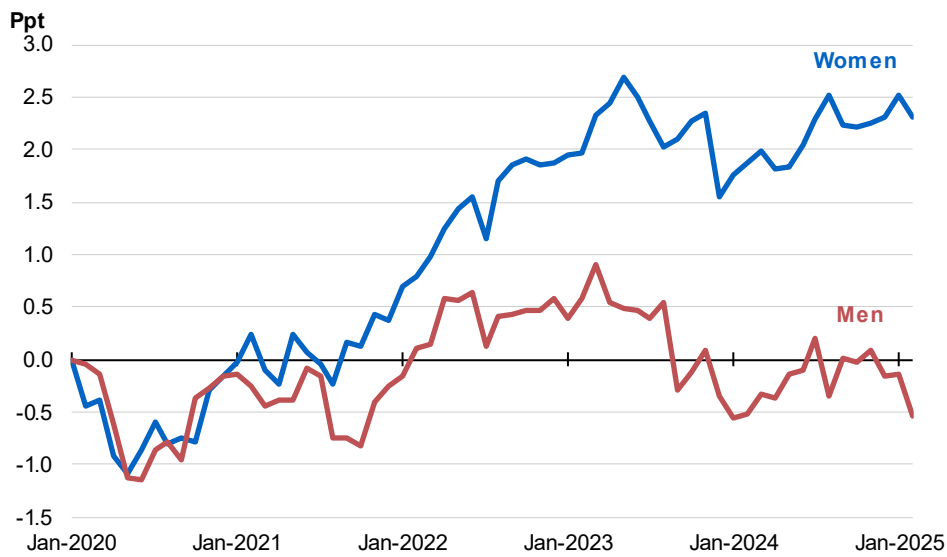
The availability of remote working arrangements provides more options for families to choose how to balance work and care and helps to support women’s participation. Prior to the pandemic in 2019, 25 per cent of employed people did some work from home. This peaked at 37 per cent in 2021, before falling to 34 per cent in 2023.¹⁹

Increasing prevalence of working from home has coincided with a marked increase in women’s participation, particularly full-time participation (Figure 4.3). The share of women participating full-time increased by 2.3 percentage points between the start of the pandemic and February 2025, while the share of men participating full-time has remained steady. Around 630,000 more women are working full time than prior to the pandemic. On

average, women working full time earn around \$100,000 per year, compared with around \$45,000 for women working part-time.²⁰

The benefits of remote work have been especially pronounced for women with children, who have increased their participation significantly more than other comparable workers.²¹ Moreover, research has shown that people who work from home allocate 40 per cent of their saved commuting time to their jobs, and about 11 per cent to caring activities, with people with children allocating more of their time savings to caring.²²

Figure 4.3: Change in full-time participation rates from January 2020, by sex



Source: ABS Labour Force Survey

Note: Women's full-time participation reflects the share of women over 15 who are working full-time or actively searching for full-time work. The concept of full-time and part-time participation rates and their value to considering long-run trends in participation is discussed further in Gustafsson (2019).²³

The Government has acted to further break down barriers to participation and increase opportunities for women. This includes making early childhood education and care cheaper and more accessible, improving Government-funded PPL (see Chapter 2: *Unpaid and paid care* for further detail), investing in skills development, and providing tax relief that supports participation and lowers barriers to work.

Parents of young children who spend time out of the workforce to have and care for children may face additional barriers to workforce participation (see Chapter 2: *Unpaid and paid care* for further detail). To assist these parents, on 1 November 2024, the Government implemented the new voluntary Parent Pathways service. This service provides personalised assistance and financial support to eligible parents and carers with a youngest child aged under six years to support their education, employment, and career goals. Support may include training, career guidance and language or literacy programs.

Single women with young children are most likely to benefit from this new service, given they are far more likely to receive Parenting Payment.

Narrowing the gender pay gap

The gender pay gap has narrowed significantly to reach record lows in 2024. Recent progress to close the gap has been especially marked. Since May 2022, the gender pay gap, which is the difference in base salary earnings between women and men in full-time work, has reduced by 2.2 percentage points to 11.9 per cent in November 2024. This follows a three-year period in which the gender pay gap held steady at around 14 per cent.

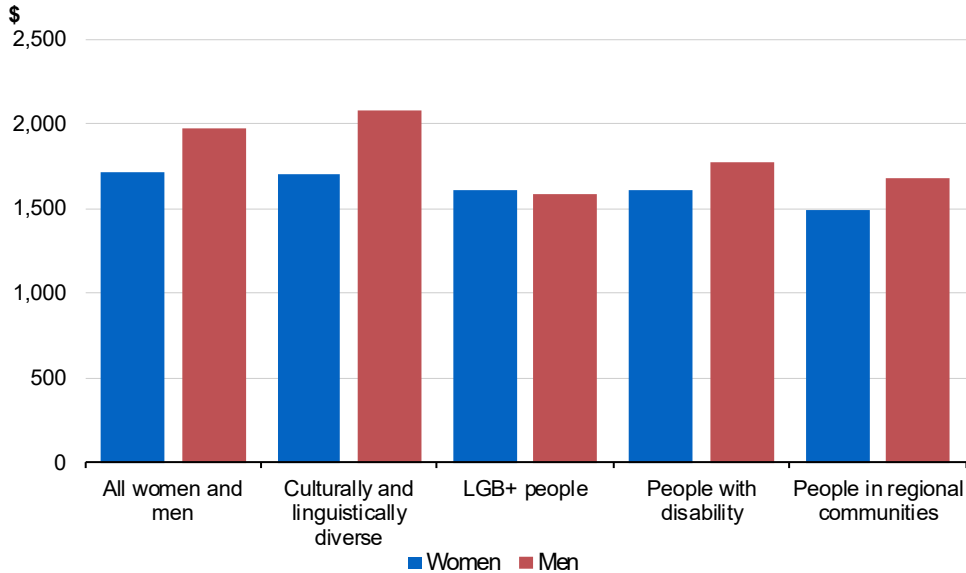
This progress has been driven in part by recent increases to minimum and award wages, as women are disproportionately represented in low-paid and award-reliant jobs. The Government has backed wage growth for low-paid workers in each of the last three Annual Wage Reviews, which have seen the National Minimum Wage increase by almost \$7,500 a year. The Government also supports the Fair Work Commission's Gender Undervaluation – Priority Awards Review, which seeks to remedy potential historical undervaluation in awards used in priority female-dominated industries.

Despite this progress, the gender pay gap continues to persist from the time women start their careers. On average, women working full-time earn \$246.30 less per week or \$12,807.60 less per year than men working full-time. This is driven by a range of complex, interrelated, and often compounding factors, including differences in gender representation and remuneration across occupations and industries, the impact of caring responsibilities on patterns of work, and gender discrimination and bias.

The gender pay gap is even greater after accounting for the total remuneration of full-time, part-time, and casual employees – although this gap is also falling. The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) calculates the average total remuneration gap for employees in private sector organisations with 100 or more employees at 21.1 per cent in 2023–24 – a decrease of 1.7 percentage points from 2021–22. In addition to base salary, this gap also accounts for superannuation, overtime, bonuses, and other additional payments, with part-time and casual roles converted into annualised full-time equivalent earnings. Taking into account CEO, Head of Business and Casual Manager remuneration, which was included for the first time in the 2023–24 WGEA data, the gender pay gap for 2023–24 is 21.8 per cent.

Experimental analysis of the HILDA Survey has enabled an understanding of how pay differs for some diverse groups (Figure 5). On average, men working full-time earn around \$1,970 per week, compared to \$1,720 for women who work full-time. Women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, LGB+ women, women with disability, and women in regional areas earn less than other women, on average.²⁴ In 2023, the gender pay gap between culturally and linguistically diverse women and men is 18 per cent, higher than that for all women and men (13 per cent). This points towards the intersectional impacts of gender inequality experienced by a range of women with different backgrounds, identities and lived experiences.

Figure 5: Full-time average weekly earnings for select cohorts, by gender



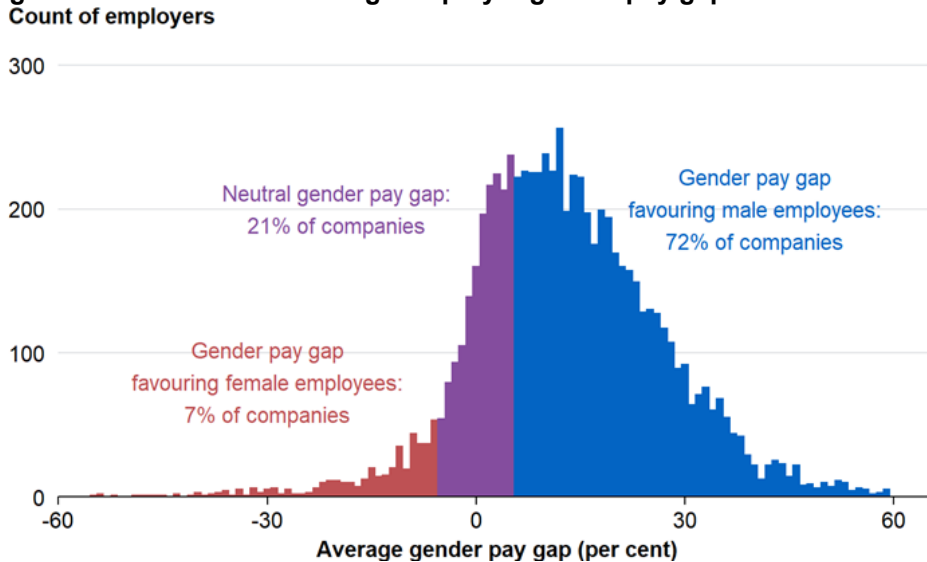
Source: HILDA, 2023.

Note: Regional communities excludes remote areas

Publishing employer gender pay gaps

In March 2025, WGEA published the gender pay gaps for private sector employers with 100 or more employees for the second time. Covering 2023–24, this publication shows some progress, with 56 per cent of employers improving their gender pay gap in the last year. However, 72 per cent of employers still have a gender pay gap in favour of men (Figure 6). Across every industry, firms are more likely to have a pay gap in favour of men than women. The second publication included average pay gaps for the first time, as well as new data, such as the employer gender pay gaps for corporate groups and subsidiaries of corporate groups.

Figure 6: Distribution of average employer gender pay gaps



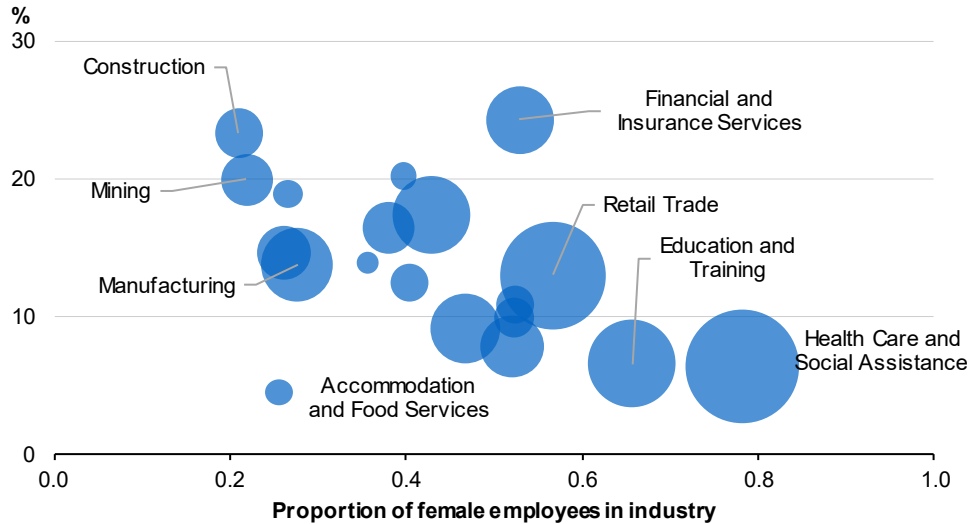
Source: WGEA employer gender pay gaps (2025)

Notes: Only includes private sector firms with more than 100 employees. Gender pay gaps are calculated using employee's total remuneration, including bonuses. The pay gap is the difference in average male and female earnings, expressed as a proportion of male earnings. A 'neutral' gender pay gap includes firms where male and female remuneration is within +/- 5 per cent.

The Government's publication of employer gender pay gaps is a catalyst for change. For employers, it is an opportunity to reconsider how they hire, promote, retain, and remunerate their staff. Employees are also better equipped to make more informed choices about where they work. Greater transparency on gender pay gaps also fosters more informed public discussion of gender equality issues, drives accountability across employers, and promotes better practices through comparability and peer review.

Publication of employer gender pay gaps has also enabled new insights into the gender pay gap in the private sector, including how women and men are paid across industries. The data highlights that industries with greater gender segregation also tend to have higher gender pay gaps. On average, employer-level pay gaps in 2023–24 were largest in male-dominated industries such as construction and mining, and smallest in female-dominated industries such as health care and social assistance (Figure 7). In general, workplaces in industries employing a larger share of women tend to report lower gender pay gaps.

Figure 7: Average employer gender pay gap and proportion of female employees, by industry



Source: WGEA employer gender pay gaps (2025)

Notes: The size of the bubbles reflects the number of employees in each industry, who are included in the WGEA sample of employers. Includes all workers in private sector firms with more than 100 employees. Remuneration includes overtime and bonuses, and is annualised to full-time equivalent for casual and part-time employees.

Encouraging employer-level action

The Government has introduced legislation that, when passed, will require large employers to commit to achieving gender equality targets over three years and report their progress to WGEA. Where employers fail to set targets and achieve, or make progress towards, their targets in a three-year period, they will be ineligible for a certificate of compliance from WGEA. Employers must supply a certificate of compliance to be considered for government contracts above certain thresholds. Through greater transparency and accountability, this will encourage further employer-level action to close the gender pay gap and assist employees to make more informed choices about where they work.

Enhancing long-term economic equality and security for women

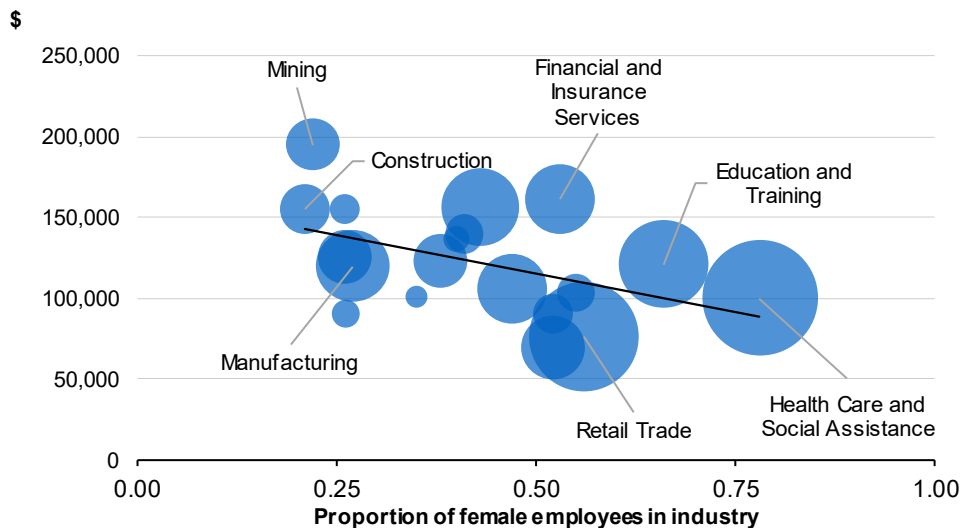
Improving economic outcomes for women requires a range of policy levers to target structural and long-term drivers of inequality. This includes building a more gender-balanced workforce, supporting more women in full-time employment, improving women's housing security, and ensuring the retirement income system works for everyone. Prioritising long-term investment in these areas will support women's workforce participation and help close the gender gaps in pay and superannuation.

Building a more gender-balanced workforce

Harnessing all available talent and increasing women’s workforce participation across male-dominated industries is key to closing the gender pay gap, addressing workforce shortages, and supporting key national priorities, including the transition to net zero.

However, the Australian workforce remains highly gender-segregated by industry and occupation. Female-dominated industries and occupations, such as education and training and health care and social assistance, tend to have lower average rates of pay than gender-balanced and male-dominated occupations and industries, which contributes to the gender pay gap (Figure 8). In addition, women remain under-represented in managerial and executive positions across industries, including in the highest-paying industries and in female-dominated industries.

Figure 8: Average remuneration and proportion of female employees, by industry



Source: WGEA employer gender pay gaps (2025)

Notes: The size of the bubbles reflects the number of employees in each industry, who are included in the WGEA sample of employers. The line represents the trend. Includes all workers in private sector firms with more than 100 employees. Remuneration includes overtime and bonuses, and is annualised to full-time equivalent for casual and part-time employees.

Breaking down gender segregation in the workforce requires addressing the key barriers faced by women in workplaces. This includes reducing the incidence of workplace sexual harassment and discrimination, improving workplace culture, making workplaces safer and more inclusive for everyone, removing barriers for remuneration and career progression opportunities, supporting access to suitable workplace amenities and personal protective equipment, and increasing diversity in the pipeline of future workers. It also means addressing the undervaluation of feminised jobs, the unequal share of unpaid work and care, and gender stereotypes that influence education and career choices.

The Government is taking action to reduce gender segregation and address workforce shortages by supporting more women to pursue careers in key high-demand industries. This includes through the Australian Skills Guarantee, the Building Women's Careers Program, Free TAFE, and the Future Made in Australia agenda. Through WGEA, the Government is also collecting and publishing data about how employers are preventing and responding to sexual harassment in the workplace. This offers insight into the implementation of the positive duty on employers to take reasonable steps to eliminate workplace sexual harassment, sex discrimination and sex-based harassment, and how any gaps can be addressed.

Promoting gender equality in gender-segregated industries

MYEFO highlights: Reducing gender segregation in Australia's workforce

The Government is providing \$16.4 million over two years from 2024–25 to pilot innovative solutions to advance gender equality in gender segregated industries, occupations, and workplaces. These solutions aim to increase workplace flexibility, build inclusive workplace cultures, and ensure workplace facilities and amenities are adequate for the health, safety and dignity of women and parents in male-dominated industries and workplaces.

The Government is also providing \$70.0 million over three years from 2025–26 to establish the First Nations Clean Energy Futures Grants Program, which will reduce barriers to accessing clean energy for First Nations communities and support new First Nations led clean energy projects. Under this program, First Nations women will be supported to participate in the clean energy transition through targeted outreach, gender-inclusive training, and capacity building, and to engage with and develop leadership roles in community-led energy programs and projects.

The Government is supporting women through the implementation of the Future Made in Australia agenda, including through the Community Benefit Principles. These principles ensure investments made under the agenda benefit local workers and businesses, and specifically promote the development of more skilled and inclusive workforces, including for women.

The Future Made in Australia agenda will support gender equality through the design and implementation of key programs, including the \$1.7 billion Future Made in Australia Innovation Fund, the \$1 billion Green Iron Investment Fund and the \$10.0 million Green Metals Innovation Network. For example, the Green Metals Innovation Network will support the development of the future green metals workforce, including supporting the participation of women and First Nations Australians.

Gender analysis in practice: Green Iron Investment Fund

The Government's new \$1 billion Green Iron Investment Fund will boost green iron manufacturing and supply chains by supporting early mover green iron projects and unlocking private investment at scale.

The current iron ore mining sector is male-dominated. WGEA's research shows women in male-dominated industries are typically under-represented across all levels, including in leadership and management, and experience significant gender pay gaps. While most metals manufacturing companies are taking steps to meet diversity targets, gender disparity still exists at the leadership level. For example, in the primary metal and metal product manufacturing subsector, women comprise only 19 per cent of the management workforce and 14 per cent of CEOs. Similarly, in the fabricated metal product manufacturing subsector, women comprise only 16 per cent of the management workforce and 10 per cent of CEOs.

In designing the Green Iron Investment Fund, the Department of Industry, Science and Resources will consider how the fund can provide benefits for communities, including how the fund can be used to develop a more skilled and inclusive workforce. Along with the economic opportunities of a competitive green iron industry, this is expected to encourage more women to join the iron sector and support women to remain in the sector for longer, including through increased representation at leadership levels.

Promoting gender equality in national skills and training systems

Structural and cultural change to support greater diversity and inclusion is needed to increase women's workforce participation in traditionally male-dominated industries and occupations, including those in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). In 2022, women made up 37 per cent of enrolments in university STEM courses and just 17 per cent of vocational education and training (VET) STEM enrolments.

The Government has scaled up its initiatives to improve opportunities for women, girls and gender diverse people in STEM education and careers. In 2024, the Government announced an additional \$3.8 million over seven years from 2024–25 to Science and Technology Australia to deliver its Superstars of STEM program, to boost the profile of diverse women and non-binary role models in STEM. It also announced an additional \$7.1 million over five years from 2024–25 for Science in Australia Gender Equity to deliver an expanded diversity in science accreditation framework. This will help create safe, diverse and inclusive workplaces in the higher education, research and VET sector.

The inaugural National Skills Plan, which was published in September 2024 and forms part of the National Skills Agreement, reaffirms the Government's ambitions for reducing gender segregation in the VET sector and related occupations, and ensuring the VET sector is inclusive, safe and supportive for women. This is supported by individual Commonwealth, state, and territory plans, which detail the action being taken individually and collaboratively to address national priorities, including gender equality. These plans will be reviewed annually to ensure progress is sustained.

The Government has partnered with states and territories to deliver over \$1.5 billion funding for Free TAFE over 2023 to 2026, and is investing a further \$1.6 billion in making Free TAFE permanent from 2027. The existing Free TAFE program has already seen more than 568,000 enrolments for courses in national and state priority areas between January 2023 and September 2024, with 62.3 per cent being taken up by women. Data from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research for September 2024 has found that almost 80 per cent more women are training as apprentices in male-dominated trades compared to 2019, albeit off a low base.

MYEFO highlight: Ongoing Free TAFE

The Government is supporting more women to obtain a VET qualification by providing \$253.7 million over two years from 2026–27 (and an additional \$1.4 billion from 2028–29 to 2034–35) to make Free TAFE an enduring program from 2027, supporting at least 100,000 places a year. Free TAFE will prioritise cohorts that typically face barriers to education and employment such as women, First Nations people, people with disability, the unemployed and those on income support. The Government introduced legislation to give effect to this investment in November 2024.

Free TAFE will support women's equitable access to education and training. Completing a VET course offers pathways to well-paid and rewarding work, including a median income uplift of \$11,800 in the year following completion. Women graduates also had a 17 percentage point increase in employment, reaching an employment rate of 83 per cent after completion.

Access to secure and affordable housing

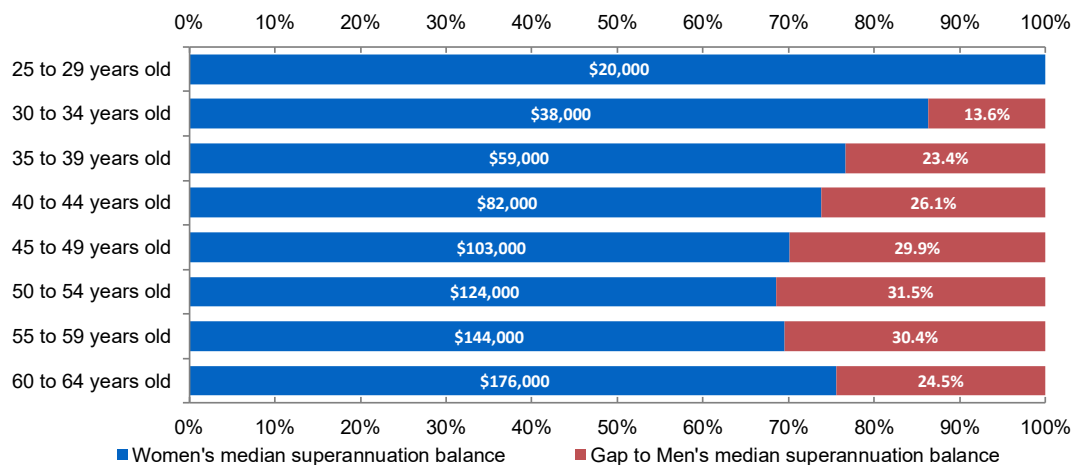
Secure and affordable housing is a key enabler of meaningful economic and social participation. Women are increasingly at higher risk of experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness in retirement than men, and single women who do not own their home are at the greatest risk of poverty in retirement. One of the leading causes of housing insecurity for women and children is family and domestic violence. Older women are also at a higher risk due to compounding factors such as career interruptions for unpaid care, insecure work arrangements, and lower lifetime earnings.

The Government is expanding crisis and transitional, social, and affordable housing for vulnerable Australians, including older women and women and children impacted by family and domestic violence (see Chapter 1: *Gender-based violence* for further detail). These investments will ease the strain on crisis accommodation, reduce unmet need for transitional housing, and strengthen pathways into longer-term housing for more women and children. The Government also supports first home buyers and single parents and guardians into home ownership through the Home Guarantee Scheme. Since May 2022, the Scheme has supported over 74,900 women, including over 3,000 single mothers or single female guardians with a dependent through the Family Home Guarantee.

Strengthening women’s retirement outcomes

In 2022–23, the median superannuation balance for women aged 60 to 64 approaching retirement was 24.5 per cent less than men of the same age (Figure 9). The gap between the retirement incomes of women and men is narrower than the gap in working-life earnings and superannuation balances. This is primarily due to the Age Pension, which helps offset some of the inequity women face in their working life.

Figure 9: Median superannuation balances and gap for women, by age



Source: Member Account Attribute Service and Member Account Transaction Service data 2022–23

Superannuation will be paid on Government-funded PPL for babies born or adopted on or after 1 July 2025. This recognises the important contribution parents make to society and the value of unpaid care. It will also reduce the impact of parental leave on retirement outcomes, particularly for women, who are overwhelmingly the recipients of Government-funded PPL. This builds on the Government’s expansion of Government-funded PPL by two weeks every year until it reaches 26 weeks in July 2026.

MYEFO highlight: Implementing Payday Super

The Government is providing \$404.1 million over four years from 2024–25 (and \$11.2 million per year ongoing) to implement the 2023–24 Budget Measure titled *Securing Australians' Superannuation Package*. From 1 July 2026, employers will be required to pay their employees' Superannuation Guarantee entitlements on the same day they pay salary and wages. This change will particularly benefit workers in the lower paid, casual and insecure workforce, who are more likely to miss out when superannuation is paid less frequently. Women are over-represented in this cohort.

Health

Key statistics

<p>Likelihood of having at least one chronic condition</p> <p>Women: 52.3% Men: 47.4%</p>	<p>Use of contraceptives in 2025</p> <p>One in three Australian women aged 18–39 who use the combined oral contraceptive pill are paying for a non-PBS listed pill</p>
<p>Proportion of people living with anxiety and depression, respectively in 2022</p> <p>Women: 21.1% and 8.6% Men: 13.3% and 6.5%</p>	<p>Women’s experiences of menopause</p> <p>One in four women aged 45 to 64 report menopause symptoms make it hard to do daily activities²⁵ and women with menopause are at higher risk of depression and anxiety²⁶</p>
<p>Top three leading causes of death in 2023</p> <p>Women: Dementia, heart disease, cerebrovascular diseases Men: Heart disease, dementia, lung cancer</p>	<p>Leading risk factors contributing to disease burden in Australia in 2024</p> <p>Women: Overweight, tobacco use, and diabetes or pre-diabetes indicators Men: Overweight, tobacco use, and diet</p>

Australians have different experiences of health due to variations in both sex (biological characteristics) and gender (sociocultural norms). Across all forms of care, women face disproportionately higher financial costs and significant barriers to access due to a range of factors, including sex and gender bias in the health system.²⁷ Targeted and tailored support is essential to support the unique and multifaceted health needs and experiences of women, including by considering the experiences and needs of women in whole-of-population health systems and interventions.

As outlined in *Working for Women* and the *National Women’s Health Strategy 2020–2030*, socioeconomic status, higher health care expenses, and limited availability of treatment options all hinder women’s access to affordable, targeted care, reflecting implicit and explicit bias against women within the system.

Different dimensions of a person's identity can also intersect and influence their experiences and outcomes in the health system. Financial barriers and experiences of bias and discrimination are compounded for women who live with disability, are First Nations people, identify as LGBTIQ+, are from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, or from rural and regional communities. *Working for Women* highlights that sex and gender bias in the health system can lead to a lack of or delayed diagnosis and treatment, resulting in poorer health outcomes.

The Government's focus on enhanced access and affordability of women's health care enables continued progress under *Working for Women*, which outlines the need to improve sex and gender equity in health care through more targeted and effective treatments, better care delivery, and enhanced data and information.

Since the 2022–23 October Budget, the Government has committed more than \$23.5 billion to Strengthening Medicare and made significant investments in targeted women's health care as part of this Budget. This Budget increases health care access and affordability, including increased access to bulk billing and urgent care, and reduced costs for treatments and medicines for sexual, reproductive and maternal health. This includes delivering affordable contraceptive options, enhanced access to services and treatment for in vitro fertilisation (IVF), endometriosis and menopause, and tailored mental and maternal health services for all Australian women.

Strengthening women's health care across the life course

Women and girls face a range of health needs and challenges throughout their lives, from puberty to pregnancy, motherhood, perimenopause, menopause and beyond. However, these needs have long been shrouded in shame and stigma, with inadequate treatment options stemming from deep-rooted sex and gender bias in the healthcare system. The National Women's Health Advisory Council's 2023–24 annual report highlighted the extensive impact of sex and gender bias on women's lives and in the health system, including structural barriers, feelings of abandonment and self-doubt, delayed diagnosis and treatment, higher health care out-of-pocket costs, and lost educational and career opportunities.²⁸

Without affordable and accessible care, these challenges can negatively impact women's quality of life, physical and mental health, and ability to fully participate in the economy and their communities. This Budget delivers significant investments in targeted women's health care to provide more choice, lower costs and better health care for women, while tackling sex and gender bias in the health system. This includes providing more affordable contraceptive and IVF treatments, greater access to endometriosis and menopause care, mental health and maternal care, and training and resources for patients and clinicians to better understand women's needs and health treatments.

Sexual and reproductive health

Supporting and promoting the sexual and reproductive health and rights of all Australians is crucial in empowering individuals to make informed decisions about their bodies and maintaining women's quality of life as they age. The Government is making a landmark investment in women's health in response to two recent Senate Inquiries, on universal access to reproductive health care and issues related to menopause and perimenopause. Both inquiries heard from stakeholders, including women with lived experience and academics, with the Government supporting or supporting in principle 36 recommendations from the reproductive health care inquiry and 16 recommendations from the menopause inquiry.

Addressing sexual and reproductive health is also a priority in the *National Women's Health Strategy 2020–2030*, which acknowledges that inadequate access to health care can negatively affect women's mental, emotional, and physical health. To support women's quality of life and full participation in their communities, in education and in the economy, women's sexual and reproductive health needs must be met across their life span.

Increased choice and lower costs for contraceptives

While around two-thirds of Australian women between the ages of 18 and 44 use a form of contraception,²⁹ the cost of the most effective options can be a major barrier to uptake. The Senate Inquiry into universal access to reproductive health care found that women continue to bear most of the financial burden for sexual and reproductive health care, in particular contraception.³⁰ In Australia, one in three women aged 18 to 39 who use the combined oral contraceptive pill are paying for a non-PBS listed pill which costs them hundreds of dollars each year.³¹

Australian women also have some of the lowest uptake amongst comparable countries of long-term reversible contraceptives (LARCs) like intrauterine contraceptive devices or birth control implants, despite these being one of the most effective and cost-effective forms of contraception. LARC use in Australia remains low at approximately 11 per cent and is below the international benchmark of 15 per cent.³² For LARCs to be more accessible, cost, service and educational barriers must be addressed, including by increasing the number of health professionals who are appropriately trained in insertion and removal.

As part of the Government's ongoing efforts to make medicines cheaper, this Budget invests in additional contraceptive options to deliver more choice, lower costs and to modernise women's health care. The listings of Yaz® and Yasmin® from 1 March 2025 represent the first Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) listings for new oral contraceptive pills in over 30 years, while the listing of Slinda® from 1 May 2025 will further increase access to a range of cheaper hormonal contraception options. This Budget also builds on earlier investments by establishing eight LARC centres of excellence to train GPs and nurse practitioners to insert and remove LARCs, and by increasing LARC Medicare rebates, estimated to save around 300,000 women up to \$400 each year. Greater access to affordable contraceptive options will support women's overall quality of life by helping to reduce unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions and sexually transmitted infections, while easing the cost-of-living.

More support for women experiencing menopause and perimenopause

One in four women aged 45–64 report experiencing menopause symptoms that have made it hard to do their daily activities. Menopause increases the risk of developing many serious health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, dementia and osteoporosis, and can have broad implications for a woman's participation in the workforce, financial security, relationships and overall wellbeing.

As highlighted in the Senate Inquiry into issues related to menopause and perimenopause, many women feel the health system does not provide adequate support for the experiences of menopause and perimenopause, including limited access to much needed treatment and support. Women have felt dismissed by healthcare professionals and vulnerable to harmful health misinformation, while access to hormone replacement therapies is hindered by shortages, prescribing hesitancy and inadequate subsidies. The Inquiry also emphasised significant challenges associated with diagnosis and a need to improve healthcare professionals' ability to manage and advise on menopause.³³

To improve health care and treatment accessibility for perimenopause and menopause, the Government has introduced three new types of menopausal therapies to the PBS for the first time in 20 years. A new Medicare rebate for menopause health assessments has also been introduced to support management of symptoms, address long term risks and promote overall wellbeing. To increase health professional capability, funding is provided for health professionals to undertake additional training in menopause and perimenopause, and to develop the first-ever national clinical guidelines to improve quality of care. These targeted investments support improved care experiences and health outcomes for women dealing with menopause and perimenopause.

Enhancing endometriosis care

Around one in nine Australian women suffer from endometriosis. On average, it takes seven years to receive an endometriosis diagnosis, and the overall annual cost of endometriosis is estimated to be \$30,900 per person.

This Budget improves the affordability of endometriosis treatment on the PBS and increases targeted health care for endometriosis. Diagnosis timeframes and early access to intervention and treatment options will be further improved by the establishment of eleven new endometriosis and pelvic pain clinics, and by an expanded scope of all 33 clinics to support women seeking specialised support to manage menopause and perimenopause symptoms.

Supporting this is the future introduction, from 1 November 2025, of a new dedicated Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) ultrasound item to support women with severe endometriosis.

Budget highlights: More choice, lower costs and cheaper medicines for women

The Government is investing \$792.9 million over five years from 2024–25 to improve health care access and affordability for women. This package includes measures which improve contraceptive choice, provide more support for menopause and perimenopause and enhance endometriosis care.

Improving contraceptive choice

The Government is creating more choice and delivering lower costs for contraceptive options by:

- listing the new oral contraceptive pills drospirenone with ethinylestradiol (Yaz® and Yasmin®) on the PBS from 1 March 2025. These are the first new oral contraceptive pills listed in more than 30 years and are expected to benefit more than 50,000 women who would otherwise pay around \$380 per year and will now pay \$126.40 a year, or just \$30.80 a year with a concession card.
- listing the oral contraceptive drospirenone (Slinda®) on the PBS from 1 May 2025, which is expected to benefit 100,000 women each year
- improving access to LARCs by reducing costs and incentivising bulk billing, with larger Medicare rebates under the MBS for the insertion and removal of LARCS with the new rebates also covering LARC delivery by Nurse Practitioners, and with the introduction of a 40 per cent bulk billing loading
- establishing eight LARC Centres of Training Excellence, to ensure healthcare professionals are trained, skilled and confident when delivering these critical services
- supporting two national trials to make it cheaper and easier for women to access contraceptives and treatment for uncomplicated urinary tract infections.

More support for menopause and perimenopause

The Government is providing support for women experiencing menopause and perimenopause by:

- listing new menopause hormone therapies estradiol (Estrogel®), progesterone (Prometrium®) and estradiol and progesterone (Estrogel Pro®) on the PBS from 1 March 2025, with around 150,000 women saving hundreds of dollars per year in out-of-pocket expenses
- introducing a new Medicare item for menopause health assessments to ensure women can get the care and support they need from their general practitioner

continued on next page

Budget highlights: More choice, lower costs and cheaper medicines for women (continued)

- funding for health professionals to access education and training on menopause and perimenopause, the development of national clinical guidelines, and a national public health awareness campaign to increase understanding of menopause and perimenopause symptoms and treatment options.

Enhancing endometriosis care

The Government is also improving access to more effective and high-quality models of care for endometriosis and pelvic pain by:

- delivering 11 new Endometriosis and Pelvic Pain Clinics across Australia, bringing the total to 33, and expanding their scope to support women seeking specialist support for menopause and perimenopause symptoms
- listing the new endometriosis treatment option relugolix with estradiol and with norethisterone (Ryeqo®) on the PBS from 1 May, which is expected to benefit 8,500 women each year
- establishing a dedicated endometriosis diagnostic ultrasound item to support women with endometriosis, as part of the Government's broader investment for new and amended Medicare Benefits Schedule items.

MYEFO highlight: Cheaper medicines and more health information for women

The Government has listed dienogest (Visanne®) on the PBS to treat patients with endometriosis from 1 December 2024. This daily treatment works to shrink and suppress the growth of abnormal tissue. Without subsidy, patients might pay around \$750 per year for treatment.

Maternal health

The journey of conceiving, pregnancy, and childbirth represents some of the most significant transitions in life, often accompanied by profound physical, emotional, and socioeconomic changes. Undiagnosed health issues during pregnancy and the post-birth period can contribute to maternal and perinatal health risks. In Australia in 2021, the rate of late gestation stillbirths (after 28 weeks) was 2.4 per 1,000 births, and stillbirths accounted for three quarters of perinatal deaths.³⁴ Pregnancy and neonatal loss can also be a traumatic experience for women and can have lasting impacts on their physical and mental health.

While the Australian healthcare system delivers safe and high-quality maternal care, there are still areas for improvement. This Budget's investments in antenatal and post-natal care and the maternity workforce (including through the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Education and Training Program), and ongoing investments to reduce stillbirth rates, will ensure that all women having children can access safe, appropriate and high-quality maternal health care. Recognising the importance of community-driven, strengths-based approaches for First Nations communities, culturally safe First Nations maternal health services will also continue to be delivered through initiatives like Birthing on Country, in partnership with the Aboriginal community controlled maternal health workforce.

Budget highlights: Supporting maternal health care across Australia

The Government is providing \$662.6 million over five years from 2024–25 to strengthen and support the health workforce. This includes support for the maternity workforce, such as:

- expanding the Primary Care Nursing and Midwifery Scholarship Program to support nurses and midwives to undertake post-graduate study
- supporting the construction of the Nursing and Midwifery Academy in Victoria, to provide professional development pathways to enable nurses and midwives to enhance their critical leadership, research and training and education skills
- providing \$1.3 million over two years from 2024–25 to extend the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Education and Training Program which provides upskilling and training opportunities for multidisciplinary teams in obstetrics and gynaecology. This program has demonstrated a positive impact in rural and remote areas, being instrumental in enhancing the quality of maternity and related health services.

Ensuring continuity of maternity services

The Government has also announced funding to support the continuity of maternity services in Hobart and Gosford, providing \$6.0 million over two years from 2024–25 to the Tasmanian Government and \$10.0 million over four years from 2025–26 to the New South Wales Government.

More affordable access to early IVF treatment

From 1 April 2025, women with specific low levels of reproductive hormones will have earlier access to a combination therapy known as Pergoveris® (follitropin alfa with lutropin alfa) through the PBS. This was previously only funded in later IVF cycles. Over 6,000 women access Pergoveris® on the PBS each year, many who require four pens to complete a cycle. In response, double the maximum number of Pergoveris pens (four instead of two) per script will be listed.

MYEFO highlights: Providing support throughout the maternity journey

Fertility support

The Government provided \$0.6 million in 2025–26 to the University of New South Wales for the maintenance and improvement of the YourIVFSuccess website, to support Australian couples with independent advice and information on fertility support services and IVF.

Support for antenatal and post-natal care

From 3 February 2025, the maternal respiratory syncytial virus vaccine (Abrysvo®) was added to the National Immunisation Program (\$174.5 million 2024–2028). The vaccine is now free for eligible pregnant women, ensuring they can protect their baby against serious illness from respiratory syncytial virus, which is a leading cause of hospitalisation in children aged less than 6 months.

As part of the preventive health measure, the Government invested \$187.9 million over five years from 2024–25, including:

- \$5.1 million to continue delivery of the Every Moment Matters awareness campaign in 2025–26, to support women to achieve alcohol-free pregnancies and reduce the incidence of babies born with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder
- \$5.3 million for perinatal mental health screening across public antenatal and postnatal care settings
- \$3.1 million to extend the Australian Red Cross Lifeblood's role to continue providing pasteurised donor human milk to premature babies in neonatal intensive care units or special care units across the hospital network
- \$2.6 million to continue support for the Australian Breastfeeding Association's National Breastfeeding Helpline, to provide a free call service on breastfeeding to women and families.

Support for families experiencing stillbirth

The Government has provided \$7.1 million to extend a range of services to reduce the stillbirth rate in Australia and to ensure high quality care for families who experience stillbirth, with a focus on women from high-risk population cohorts.

First Nations women's maternal health

The Government has supported the extension of ten existing Birthing on Country services to provide First Nations midwifery continuity of care to First Nations women and babies for a further 12 months to 30 June 2026.

Women's wellbeing and mental health

Mental health, and access to care, is impacted by a range of social and economic inequities which are disproportionately experienced by women. The *National Women's Health Strategy 2020–2030* highlights that key factors affecting women's mental health are socioeconomic factors, poor access to tailored mental health services and unique challenges at different life stages. A higher prevalence of chronic conditions among women increases their risk of mental health conditions, driving strong demand for mental health services. In their lifetimes, one in three women have anxiety and one in six have depression, conditions made likelier in the event of domestic and sexual violence which can then result in post-traumatic stress and other disorders. Women also account for 67 per cent of eating disorders,³⁵ and experience particular mental health challenges associated with pregnancy and menopause.

First Nations women face significant mental health challenges, including higher rates of mental health conditions and suicide than non-Indigenous men and women, often stemming from historical trauma, social determinants and lack of culturally appropriate support services. Around one in four First Nations people aged 15 and over (26 per cent) would have liked to access support for their mental health but did not in the last 12 months.

This Budget is responding to barriers in accessing mental health by delivering funding for culturally appropriate care for First Nations peoples, and high-quality free digital mental health for all Australians. Investments in psychosocial support, early intervention, eating disorders and mental health training for nurses and allied health professionals will strengthen the mental health workforce and improve mental health outcomes.

Budget highlights: Mental health supports

Culturally safe mental health supports for First Nations people

The Government is investing \$24.7 million over four years from 2025–26 to establish a flexible funding pool for First Nations social and emotional wellbeing and mental health activities, new social and emotional wellbeing assessment tools and processes, and support for 150 First Nations psychology students.

Digital Mental Health Services

The Government is investing \$46.0 million over four years from 2024–25 to continue digital mental health services. This funding is in addition to the \$135.2 million announced by the Government in February 2025 to deliver high-quality, free digital mental health supports for all Australians.

Wellbeing support for the LGBTIQ+ community

The Government is providing \$0.4 million in 2025–26 to QLife for the continued delivery of LGBTIQ+ peer support and referral services.

MYEFO highlights: Better mental health outcomes

As part of the Strengthening Medicare package, the Government committed \$448.3 million over four years from 2024–25 for prevention and early intervention activities, mental health treatment initiatives, suicide prevention and postvention initiatives, support for First Nations people and to uplift the mental health workforce.

Funding included \$4.6 million in 2025–26 to support upskilling the mental health workforce in evidence-based eating disorder interventions, \$1.0 million in 2025–26 for the National Eating Disorder Collaboration, and \$0.2 million in 2025–26 to provide in-person phone and online services for unpaid carers of people with eating disorders.

The Government committed \$272.1 million over two years from 2025–26 to extend Commonwealth psychosocial support activities. This will directly benefit women, who make up over 60 per cent of the Commonwealth Psychosocial Support Program users living with severe mental illness.

Improving health care access, affordability and quality for women

For many women in Australia, getting the care they need is not a matter of whether they need it, but whether they can afford it. Alongside their varied health needs across the life course, women have a higher disease burden of chronic conditions, requiring more frequent visits to the doctor for ongoing and complex care management. Women have a higher likelihood than men of having one or more chronic health conditions. As demand for and utilisation of health care increases, so do out-of-pocket costs, which then have a greater impact on women overall. Women's out-of-pocket medical costs are disproportionately higher than for men at every age grouping from 19 to 64,³⁶ in turn creating barriers to care and worsening disease burden.

The Government is committed to improving primary health care for Australians with its investments towards Strengthening Medicare over the past three years. In addition to targeted investments in women's health, new investments in bulk billing, Medicare Urgent Care Clinics, the primary care workforce and reducing the costs of medicines will improve the access and affordability of care for all Australians, with increased benefits for women with greater need for health services and medicines.

Improving the access and affordability of primary care and medicines

As the first point of contact in the healthcare system, seeing a GP is crucial for women, ensuring they receive comprehensive care, regular screenings, and continuous management of chronic conditions. Through the Government's Strengthening Medicare package, expanded bulk billing incentive eligibility and other incentives will mean that nine out of ten GP visits are expected to be bulk billed by 2030. A boost to bulk billing rates is a boost to women's health outcomes, enabling more Australians to access essential medical care for free, without the financial burden of out-of-pocket expenses. In 2023–24, women spent around \$331 million more than men on GP services. Given women's higher demand for and use of GP services and bulk billing, women are likely to see greater cost savings as a group.

Gender analysis in practice: Bulk billing for all Australians

In line with *Working for Women* and the *National Women's Health Strategy 2020–2030*, this Government initiative expands access to affordable primary care. While benefiting all Medicare patients, it is likely to have a greater positive impact on women, who face higher health care demands and barriers to access.

2023–2024 Medicare Benefits Schedule data shows that women are:

- more likely to access GP services, including for chronic conditions: 11.9 million women accessed GP services (2.5 million for chronic GP services) compared to 10.6 million men (1.9 million for chronic GP services)
- accessing more services in total: 95 million services (including 6.3 million chronic disease services) compared to 69 million services (including 4.8 million chronic disease services) for men, but women are bulk billed less frequently across GP services.

Diverse groups often face even greater needs and barriers, due to factors such as limited educational opportunities, cultural norms, and logistical, financial and language barriers.³⁷ For example:

- First Nations women have more chronic conditions (for example, asthma, arthritis, diabetes, osteoporosis and kidney disease)
- some women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have greater risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and mental illness, and lower rates of accessing health care and preventative care
- women in rural, regional and remote areas have worse access to health care due to geographic spread, infrastructure gaps, low population density, and higher service delivery costs.

Under the Government's new bulk billing initiatives, Medicare rebates for a standard GP consultation for a non-concessional adult at a practice participating in the Bulk Billing Practice Incentive Program will increase by 62 per cent in metro areas, 88 per cent in regional centres, 98 per cent in small rural towns and 103 per cent in remote areas.

In addition to ongoing care from their GP, women also need access to free, high-quality urgent care when and where it is needed. Medicare Urgent Care Clinics continue to provide crucial health care support for Australians, particularly for women and families, by offering timely care without out-of-pocket expenses while also avoiding hospitals and emergency departments. Uptake of Medicare Urgent Care Clinics services remains high – since June 2023, there have been more than 1.3 million visits to the Government's existing 87 Clinics, with women making up approximately 55 per cent of visits. In this Budget, the Government is providing funding to expand the Medicare Urgent Care Clinics program, with an additional 50 clinics across Australia, taking the total number of clinics to 137 Australia-wide.

The cost of medicines remains another significant health care barrier for women. Just as women are typically higher users of health services, they also tend to use more medicines, especially for managing reproductive health or chronic conditions. For example, among individuals aged 25–34, 68.3 per cent of women and 44.1 per cent of men received prescriptions.³⁸ To further ease cost-of-living pressures and improve access to necessary treatments for Australians and women, lowering of the PBS general patient co-payment will reduce out-of-pocket costs for each script dispensed. The reduced PBS co-payment will make a meaningful difference for women by bringing down the cost of their medicines, including ongoing medication for conditions such as endometriosis, menopause and osteoporosis, or contraception. For general patients with a monthly prescription filled at the maximum price, a patient will save \$79.20 a year. Families filling four prescriptions a month will save as much as \$316.80.

Budget highlights: Enhancing access to affordable health care

Strengthening Medicare: improving access to affordable health care

The Government is committing a further \$7.9 billion over four years from 2025–26 to support access to affordable primary care and provide more bulk billing for all Australians. This includes:

- expanding eligibility for bulk billing incentives to cover all Australians
- establishing the Bulk Billing Practice Incentive Program to provide incentives to practices across Australia that choose to become fully bulk billing practices.

The Government is providing \$644 million over three years from 2025–26 to establish 50 additional Medicare Urgent Care Clinics across the country to make health care more accessible and convenient for Australians and to help to reduce pressure on hospitals and emergency departments. The addition of 50 new clinics means that 80 per cent of Australians will live within a 20-minute drive of a clinic.

Cheaper medicines

The Government is making medicines cheaper by committing \$784.6 million over four years from 2025–26 to reduce the general patient co-payment under the PBS from \$31.60 to \$25.00 from 1 January 2026. Each year, this will benefit more than five million Australians, cumulatively saving more than \$200 million in out-of-pocket costs.

Ensuring coordinated and culturally appropriate care

Also critical to women's access to and experience of quality care is how it is coordinated. For women, including women from diverse groups, navigating the healthcare system can be complex. The 2022 *Strengthening Medicare Taskforce Report* highlights that despite Australia having some of the world's best health professionals, the organisation and funding of health services can be disjointed. In 2023–24, 18 per cent of Australians saw three or more different health professionals for the same condition. This can decrease engagement with the health system and impact women, who have higher rates of chronic and complex conditions.

Investment in better care coordination will enhance critical early intervention, diagnosis, treatment, management of long-term conditions and health promotion and prevention services for all Australians, including women. Culturally safe health care continues to be delivered in partnership with communities through the Health in My Language (HiML) Program, which has reached over 40,000 migrant and refugee women, and the Deadly Choices Program, enabling additional health checks on key risk areas for First Nations people. These programs demonstrate how the Government is supporting women from diverse groups to access multidisciplinary care tailored to their health, cultural and language needs by ensuring they are community-led initiatives, in partnership with Primary Health Networks.

Budget highlights: Enhancing access to coordinated health care

First Nations health care

The Government is investing to close the gap by improving health assessments and detection for First Nations Australians. This includes funding for improved detection, monitoring and management of acute rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease in First Nations communities, and support for more First Nations Australians to access health assessments through the Deadly Choices Program. The Government is also providing funding for hearing and oral health services in remote communities as part of the Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment.

The Government is also funding complementary measures, including investing \$21.4 million over three years from 2025–26 to build a nutrition workforce in remote communities through upskilling local First Nations staff in up to 106 remote stores to provide nutritional advice. The Government is also providing \$11.4 million over four years from 2025–26 to support the reduction of preventable illness by establishing or upgrading up to 12 community laundries in remote First Nations communities across northern and central Australia.

MYEFO highlights: Enhancing health care access for culturally and linguistically diverse women and LGBTIQ+ people

The Government is providing a further \$5.4 million in 2025–26 for the Health in My Language (HiML) program, bringing total investment across 2021–22 to 2025–26 to \$24.3 million. Funding will extend delivery of the HiML program that enables migrant and refugee women to discuss important health issues in their own language.

Delivered in partnership with local culturally and linguistically diverse communities, the HiML program initially focused on COVID-19 vaccinations but has since expanded to cover sexual and reproductive health topics.

Providing health information and education in diverse languages ensures that practitioners can better address the various health needs of women across Australia.

To support the implementation of the 10-Year National Action Plan for the Health and Wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ people, the Government has invested \$15.5 million over four years from 2024–25 to kick-start system-wide improvements, including:

- establishing a \$13.1 million grants program to scale up dedicated LGBTIQ+ services and support successful initiatives that build the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ communities
- investing \$2.0 million to collect data to underpin priority areas for action through La Trobe University's 'Private Lives' and 'Writing Themselves In' health and wellbeing surveys
- providing \$0.5 million to expand InterAction for Health and Human Rights InterLink program, a community-led professional psychosocial support service for people with innate variations of sex characteristics.

Leadership, representation and decision-making

Key statistics

<p>In the 47th Parliament, women make up 39.6% of the House of Representatives and 57.9% of the Senate</p>	<p>11 of 23 Cabinet positions are held by women³⁹</p>
<p>Women hold 54.4% of Australian Government board positions</p>	<p>40.6% of managers across the labour force are women</p>
<p>Women only hold 9% of CEO roles and 30% of executive leadership roles in the ASX300</p>	<p>In 2022, only 5.7% of board directors were culturally diverse women, despite women comprising 46% of board directors⁴⁰</p>

Achieving gender equality means women from a range of backgrounds meaningfully participating in decision-making and public life – in communities, sport, art and culture, education, businesses, and government. Representative leadership ensures institutions, systems and services achieve better outcomes, not only for women, but for everyone. While there is strong progress in many sectors, there is more to do to address barriers to women’s leadership and representation in Australia.

Women in Australia have been historically under-represented in leadership and decision-making structures, contributing to the gender gaps present today. This is more pronounced for First Nations women and women from diverse backgrounds, who face greater barriers to representation and career progression due to compounding forms of discrimination such as racism and sexism.

The Government is driving action to increase women’s representation across all levels of leadership and decision-making, in line with *Working for Women*. This includes supporting representation in sport to ensure women and girls can fully and equitably participate and see role models in all aspects of community life.

Women in leadership and decision-making

The Government is leading by example within the Australian Parliament, Australian Government boards, and the Australian Public Service, to improve women's leadership and meaningful participation in decision making. A critical part of this is ensuring more First Nations women, women with disability and women from diverse backgrounds are represented in decision-making and leadership positions.

Women in parliament

Since 1901, only 8.3 per cent of Cabinet members have been women, but recent developments demonstrate significant progress.⁴¹ The Government is the first gender equal federal government in Australia's history, and in January 2025, Federal Cabinet achieved gender parity for the first time (excluding the Prime Minister). In addition, the 47th Parliament is the most gender-equal on record in Australia, with women making up 45.8 per cent of parliamentarians (as at February 2025), representing a 9.2 per cent increase since the opening of the 46th Parliament.

Women in leadership

The Government reached record representation of women on Australian Government boards in 2023–24, with women holding 54.4 per cent of all positions and 45.3 per cent of Chair and Deputy Chair positions.⁴² These are the highest overall results since reporting began in 2009 and demonstrates the value of setting targets. To drive more consistent progress across all portfolios, in March 2024 the Government set new portfolio-level targets for women to hold 50 per cent of board positions and Chair and Deputy chair positions on Government boards.

Meanwhile, progress towards gender equality in the private sector has been less positive. 91 per cent of ASX300 CEO positions are held by men and the number of women being appointed as CEOs is decreasing.⁴³ This reflects women's underrepresentation in CEO pipeline roles, such as Managing Director, Chief Operating Officer and Chief Financial Officer, with men holding 82 per cent of these positions and an increasing number of companies with no women in these roles.

High-paid executive roles, where women are most under-represented, contribute significantly to the gender pay gap. The 2023–24 WGEA gender pay gap data for the first time includes CEO and Head of Business remuneration, and shows this category has the largest pay gap of all manager categories, at 27.1 per cent.

Including women's voices and experiences in decision-making

The Government is continuing to listen and respond to women from diverse backgrounds to inform policymaking and program delivery. The Working for Women Program funds partnerships to support engaging with women and the community and including their experiences in decision-making. The program aims to improve outcomes for women and gender equality in Australia and will support evidence-based projects that drive change for all women.

In the first year of the program, the Government has established two key partnerships. In October 2024, the Government announced it will provide \$10.9 million from 2024–25 to 2028–29 to partner with the National Women's Alliances to ensure women's voices and expertise inform the implementation of *Working for Women*. In February 2025, the Government announced a research partnership with the University of Sydney, providing \$5.0 million from 2024–25 to 2029–30 to help build the evidence base on what works to achieve gender equality. This will draw on women's experiences to identify practical solutions for government, industry, and community action to improve gender equality, with a focus on economic outcomes.

Supporting First Nations women in leadership and decision-making

Listening to First Nations women and girls is integral to gender equality and implementing the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. The *Wiyi Yani U Thangani* report brings together the voices of First Nations women and girls as a collective on issues that matter to them, such as leadership and decision-making. Empowering women's leadership on the ground is one of the report's seven recommendations. In March 2024, the *Wiyi Yani U Thangani* Institute for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality was launched to see through the report's recommendations and continue working towards equality for First Nations women. The Institute's Change Agenda, also published in March 2024, provides a framework to guide the Institute, community, public and private stakeholders. The Change Agenda outlines that the Institute will bring together First Nations researchers to design systemic change initiatives to improve life outcomes and deliver lasting change for First Nations women and girls.

Including First Nations women's voices in leadership and decision-making is relevant across a broad range of government activities and can have wide-ranging positive impacts. For instance, Government initiatives are supporting women's participation in Australia's clean energy transition, including for First Nations women, through measures that encourage women to take on leadership roles in energy development.

Gender analysis in practice: First Nations Clean Energy Implementation and Grants Programs

The inaugural First Nations Clean Energy Strategy is embedding First Nations expertise in the clean energy transition. In the 2024–25 MYEFO, Government provided \$70.0 million over three years from 2025–26 to establish the First Nations Clean Energy Futures Implementation and Grants Programs, which will reduce barriers to accessing clean energy for First Nations communities and support new First Nations led clean energy projects. This measure aims to advance gender equality by supporting First Nations women to take on leadership roles and self-determine how they participate in, and benefit from, Australia's clean energy transition.

Nationally, women are under-represented in the clean energy workforce, with men representing 65 per cent of workforce. First Nations people are also under-represented in this sector with employment at 1.9 per cent, however, further gender-disaggregated data is limited. Consequently, gender analysis for this measure relied on broader data relating to First Nations peoples and identifying areas to support First Nations women to take advantage of the clean energy transition.

This measure will help to mitigate skills shortages, support participation in clean energy projects and create new economic opportunities for First Nations women, such as jobs, business ownership, and community development initiatives. It will also provide First Nations communities with accessible clean energy for essential needs, contributing to quality-of-life outcomes for both men and women.

Small business ownership is an area where First Nations women are significantly under-represented, making up only 0.4 per cent of all small business owners and 36.1 per cent of First Nations small business owners in Australia. First Nations women face unique barriers when establishing or growing their enterprises, including difficulties interacting with financial institutions and exclusion due to racism, sexism and cultural discrimination. This Budget includes funding to help address the barriers facing First Nations businesswomen and entrepreneurs, in line with Outcome 8 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap for strong economic participation and development of First Nations people and their communities.

Budget highlight: Supporting First Nations women in business

The Government is providing \$3.4 million over three years from 2025–26 to establish a place-based business mentoring and coaching program. This program will provide First Nations women with greater access to the resources, networks and support they need to launch a viable business, commercialise a viable business idea or grow an existing business. The measure will provide up to six months of individualised coaching sessions for up to 75 First Nations women in both 2026–27 and 2027–28. This measure will help create the foundation for business and economic opportunities, particularly in regional and remote areas.

Women's and girls' representation and participation in sport

Sport is a powerful vehicle for driving positive societal and economic change, with benefits for individuals, communities, and society. The profile and status of women's sport is rising fast, with an expansion of national competitions, more community recognition of female sport stars and their achievements, and increased media coverage. Australia recorded its best result at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, where women and mixed teams won 13 of Australia's 18 gold medals and 32 of Australia's 53 medals overall across a range of individual and team sports. Australian women finished third in the national women's medal tally. At the Paris 2024 Paralympics, Australia finished in ninth place on the medal tally with women and mixed teams winning 10 of Australia's 18 gold medals and 29 of Australia's 63 medals.

In September 2024, the Minister for Sport and the Australian Sports Commission Chair launched the National Gender Equity in Sport Governance Policy to help address the underrepresentation of women in sports leadership. The national policy is the first of its kind in Australia and is a collaboration between the Australian Sports Commission and state and territory sport and recreation agencies. The policy includes a set of gender targets for the Australian sport sector backed by funding incentives, including for women to make up 50 per cent of all board directors, board chairs and specified board sub-committee members.

While there has been significant progress in women's sport, there continues to be a gender gap in sport participation. In 2022–23, 32 per cent of women aged 15 and over participated in a sport-related activity at least once a week, compared to 48 per cent of men. Women are also under-represented in coaching and sports administration. The Government is supporting a diverse and equitable sporting system through various measures designed to empower women to thrive at all levels of sport.

In August 2023, the Government announced the Play Our Way program, an investment of \$200.0 million over four years from 2023–24 to address sport participation barriers faced by women and girls. The competitive grant program, run in early 2024, attracted over 1,600 applications from sporting clubs, not-for-profits, community organisations and local governments, demonstrating demand to better support women's participation in sport.

Around 290 organisations across Australia have received, or will receive, funding under the program, including \$136.0 million to approximately 165 organisations for facilities grants, and \$55.8 million to approximately 125 organisations for participation and equipment grants. Funding commenced in October 2024, with projects to be completed by mid-2027.

In October 2024, the Government launched the new National Sport Strategy, Sport Horizon, which sets the priorities for sport in Australia over the next decade. The strategy promotes participation, inclusion and safety so that everyone, including women and girls, can benefit from the health, social, and economic benefits of sport.

MYEFO highlights: Supporting women's leadership and participation in sport

- The Government is providing \$3.2 million in 2025–26 to support women and girls' participation in coaching, officiating and sports administration. This includes a \$1.1 million investment to extend the Women Leaders in Sport program, which provides women with opportunities to advance their leadership journey through development programs and training initiatives. The funding also extends support for the National Generation 2032 Coach Program, which aims to increase the number and diversity of Australian high performance career coaches. The program provides direct employment for coaches within high performance sport under the supervision of a technical coach and child care support and flexible working arrangements for coaches with children.
- The Government is investing \$15.0 million over two years from 2024–25 to support the delivery of the 2026 Women's Asian Cup in Australia. This event will capitalise on the growth seen in women's sport after the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup and supports the Government's focus on increasing opportunities for women and girls in sport.

Building gender equality capability across government

The Government is uplifting gender equality capability across the Australian Public Service to ensure comprehensive gender analysis informs decision-making and drives progress towards the vision of *Working for Women*. Gender responsive budgeting was reintroduced in the 2022–23 October Budget to highlight the impacts policies have on Australian women and men. This is the second Women's Budget Statement to include case studies of gender analysis in practice, which show how these processes inform policy.

In the 2022–23 October and 2023–24 Budgets, Gender Impact Assessment pilots were undertaken on a select number of high priority proposals. Since the 2023–24 MYEFO, the Budget Process Operational Rules require all departments drafting Cabinet Submissions and New Policy Proposals to undertake gender analysis. Proposals that meet set criteria

require a more detailed Gender Impact Assessment to ensure decision makers receive accurate and evidence-based advice on the gender impacts of policy decisions. The criteria target policy areas with the most opportunity to address inequality. For example, one criterion requires a Gender Impact Assessment on proposals related to gender segregated industries, which are key drivers of Australia's gender pay gap. This targeted approach to gender responsive budgeting ensures efforts to conduct gender analysis are proportional to the policy's potential impact, value, and scope.

The Office for Women embeds gender responsive budgeting into budget processes and oversees implementation across the Australian Public Service. The Office for Women provides a range of resources on gender responsive budgeting, such as the updated *Including Gender: An APS Guide to Gender Analysis and Gender Impact Assessment*, released in January 2025.

Recent progress has also been made to improve gender-disaggregated data within Government. This includes more accurate reporting on occupations, which helps to better understand gender composition (and therefore gender gaps) in different sectors. In December 2024, the Australian Bureau of Statistics released the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA), providing an improved framework for reporting occupation-related information. OSCA has improved identification of female-dominated occupations, which previously did not reflect the number of people or different roles within occupations. For example, the occupation 'welfare worker' has been further disaggregated to recognise differences in child protection, mental health and the family, domestic and sexual violence workforce. Changes like this will support labour market analysis on gender equality and more accurate reporting on female-dominated occupations. OSCA will be used in employment data from the 2026 Census (due to be published in October 2027).

Global leadership on gender equality

Australia's international gender equality strategy

The Government is providing global leadership on gender equality. In February 2025, the Government released Australia's *International Gender Equality Strategy: For a safer, more prosperous Indo Pacific and World*. This strategy places gender equality at the centre of international engagement and builds on Australia's proud legacy as a global leader and trusted partner on gender equality. The strategy elevates efforts in support of women's health, rights and safety, gender equitable climate action, and locally led approaches to women's leadership and women's economic equality. It highlights the importance of partnerships with partner governments, civil society and the international community.

Australia is committed to meeting the target that 80 per cent of development investments are implemented in a way that effectively supports gender equality. In 2023–24, 79 per cent of Australia's development investments effectively addressed gender equality. The Government also implemented a new requirement for development and humanitarian investments valued at \$3.0 million and above to have a gender equality objective, driving an increase in expenditure on gender equality. In 2023–24, Australia invested \$2.3 billion in development programs that targeted gender equality, up from \$1.5 billion in 2021–22.

Advancing human rights and gender equality

The Government is working collaboratively with states to secure fundamental human rights for women and girls. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is an important international instrument enshrining women's human rights and advancing gender equality.

In February 2025, Australia submitted its ninth periodic report on measures taken to advance gender equality as part of Australia's reporting obligation to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (the Committee). The periodic report highlights the significant reforms Australia has made since the last report in 2016 including releasing Australia's first gender equality strategy, *Working for Women*, and progress on women's representation in parliament. The Government also supported the successful re-election of Natasha Stott Despoja AO to the Committee for the 2025–28 term to continue Australia's global leadership in advancing women's and girls' rights.

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

The Commission on the Status of Women is the premier global forum on gender policy issues, that provides an opportunity to highlight Australia's achievements, while listening, learning and reflecting upon the work of other member states. The sixty-ninth session of the Commission (CSW69), from 10 to 21 March 2025, focused on the review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing+30). In July 2024, Australia submitted its report on the implementation of Beijing+30, which reflects Australia's positive journey towards achieving gender equality over the last five years since the previous report. Australia's report fed into a regional and global review of implementation presented at CSW69, identifying key areas for accelerated action to achieving gender equality as outlined in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

-
- 1 H Miles and S Bricknell, 'Homicide in Australia 2022–23: Statistical Report 46', *Australian Institute of Criminology*, 2024.
 - 2 E Campbell et al, 'Unlocking the Prevention Potential: Accelerating action to end domestic, family and sexual violence', *Rapid Review Expert Panel*, 2024.
 - 3 W Mundy, 'Independent Review of the National Legal Assistance Partnership: Final Report', report to the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department, 2024.
 - 4 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 'Sexual Violence – Victimisation', ABS, 2021.
 - 5 Australian Industrial Transformation Institute, 'Independent review of the operation of the paid family and domestic violence leave entitlement in the review into the Fair Work Act 2009', *Department of Employment and Workplace Relations*, 2024.
 - 6 Only includes parents who participated in child care. The survey collected information on participation in a range of child care activities, including physical and emotional care, teaching, helping, playing, talking, minding, and feeding children.
 - 7 In this context a carer is a person who provides any informal assistance (help or supervision) to people with disability or older people (aged 65 years and over). Primary carers are people aged 15 years and over who provides the most informal assistance with the core activities of mobility, self-care, and communication.
 - 8 Paid parental leave provided in addition to Government-funded Paid Parental Leave.
 - 9 Analysis is based on the 2021 Census. Workers are care workers in occupations relating directly to care within specified industries and does not include the non-care workforce in these sectors.
 - 10 KPMG, Diversity Council Australia and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), 'She's Price(d)less: The economics of the gender pay gap', *KPMG, Diversity Council Australia and WGEA*, 2022.
 - 11 N Deutscher, 'Job-to-job transitions and the wages of Australian workers', *Australian Government Department of the Treasury*, 2019.
 - 12 Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), 'Statistics about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and Girls', *AHRC*, 2024, accessed 17 March 2025.
 - 13 J Weir et al, 'The Benefits Associated with Caring for Country: Literature Review', *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies*, 2011.
 - 14 Increase in hourly award wage rate as a result of all ACWVC decisions only (29 June 2023 to 1 August 2026). Does not include past or future AWRs.
 - 15 Gender-balanced industries have between 40 per cent and 60 per cent men and women employees.
 - 16 Covers private sector employers with 100 or more employees and includes the remuneration for CEOs, Heads of Business, and Casual Managers.
 - 17 Aged 60 to 64 with a superannuation balance above zero.
 - 18 This example is based on estimated tax and transfer policy settings for the 2024–25 income year. Benefit from individual components will not sum to the total benefit due to the tax paid on the higher wage and Parenting Payment (Single), as well as other interactions between the tax and transfer system. The early childhood educator is assumed to be receiving the rate of a 'Children's services employee level 3.3 after 2 years'. In this example, the ten-year-old child is in out-of-school-hours care for three hours per day, five days a week for 40 weeks per year, at a cost of \$9.20 per hour. The benefit from the cost-of-living tax cuts is calculated relative to 2023-24 income tax settings. Disposable income is the income available to a person or household inclusive of their private income and transfer payments, after income tax and net of child care costs.
 - 19 Treasury analysis of the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey, release 23.0.
-

-
- 20 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), '[Characteristics of Employment](#)', ABS, 2024.
 - 21 M Wilson and J Brooks, '[More than a third of Australians still work from home as office mandates loom](#)', *Centre for Economic Development of Australia*, 2024.
 - 22 C G Aksoy et al, 'Time Savings When Working from Home', *AEA Papers and Proceedings*, 2023, 113:597–603, doi:10.1257/pandp.20231013.
 - 23 L Gustafsson, '[Australian labour force participation: Historical trends and future Prospects - Treasury Working Paper](#)', *Australian Government Department of the Treasury*, 2021.
 - 24 While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are represented in the HILDA survey, for this analysis the sample is not large enough to produce results that are representative of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
 - 25 Jean Hailes for Women's Health, '[The impact of symptoms attributed to menopause by Australian women](#)', *Jean Hailes for Women's Health*, 2023.
 - 26 Australasian Menopause Society, '[Menopause and mental health](#)', *Australasian Menopause Society*, 2023.
 - 27 Department of Health and Aged Care, '[#EndGenderBias Survey Detailed Report](#)', *Department of Health and Aged Care*, 2024; Grattan Institute, '[Healthcare out-of-pocket costs: an agenda for International Women's Day](#)', *Grattan Institute*, 2022.
 - 28 National Women's Health Advisory Council, '[Annual Report 2023–2024](#)', *National Women's Health Advisory Council*, Australian Government, 2024.
 - 29 Family Planning NSW, '[Contraception in Australia 2005–2018](#)', 2020, 19.
 - 30 Senate Community Affairs References Committee, '[Ending the postcode lottery: Addressing barriers to sexual, maternity and reproductive healthcare in Australia](#)', Final Report, May 2023.
 - 31 Department of Health and Aged Care, '[Fact sheet: More Choice, Lower Costs and Better Health Care for Women](#)', Department of Health and Aged Care, 7 February 2025.
 - 32 K Concepcion et al, 'Cost-benefit analysis of enhancing the uptake of long-acting reversible contraception in Australia', *Australian Health Review*, 2020, 44(3):385–391, doi:10.1071/AH18190.
 - 33 Senate Community Affairs References Committee, '[Issues related to menopause and perimenopause](#)', Final Report, September 2024.
 - 34 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, '[Australia's Mothers and Babies](#)', *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare*, 2023.
 - 35 Deloitte Access Economics, '[Paying the Price, Second Edition: The economic and social impact of eating disorders in Australia](#)', *Deloitte Access Economics*, 2024.
 - 36 Deloitte Access Economics, '[Narrowing the Gap in Healthcare Costs Across Gender](#)', *Deloitte*, 2023.
 - 37 Monash University, '[Breaking health barriers for culturally and linguistically diverse Australian women](#)', *Monash University*, 2024.
 - 38 Statista, '[Share of prescribed patients in Australia FY 2023, by Age and Gender](#)', *Statista*, 2024.
 - 39 This represents gender parity in Cabinet, excluding the Prime Minister.
 - 40 Culturally diverse women are defined as women with non-Anglo Celtic origins. Diversity Council Australia, '[Culturally and racially marginalised \(CARM\) women in leadership](#)', *Diversity Council Australia*, 2023.
 - 41 Parliamentary Library, '[Women in Cabinet](#)', *Parliamentary Library*, 2024.
 - 42 As of 20 June 2024.
 - 43 Chief Executive Women, '[CEW Senior Executive Census 2024: Keeping Score of a Losing Game](#)', *Chief Executive Women*, 2024.
-



Budget

2025–26

WOMEN'S BUDGET STATEMENT